

Rethinking faculty models/roles: An emerging consensus about future directions for the professoriate

Only **30%** of faculty hold tenure-track positions—a proportion not likely to change.

Faculty, administrators and other stakeholders largely agree on potential new faculty models.

Today some 70% of faculty at U.S. institutions hold full- or part-time nontenure-track positions, and a return to the days of a largely tenure-track workforce is highly unlikely. What's less clear is what future faculty models should look like. To help campus leaders envision a way forward, the TIAA Institute commissioned a survey of more than 1,500 higher education stakeholders including tenure and nontenure-track faculty, deans, provosts, accreditors and other executives to gather their views on future faculty models. The research was conducted by Adrianna Kezar and Elizabeth Holcombe of the University of Southern California, and Daniel Maxey of Santa Clara University.

Key insights

- Stakeholder groups generally agree on the need for more full-time faculty; ensuring a scholarly component in all faculty roles; fostering more collaboration among faculty; allowing some differentiation of roles based on teaching and research; and developing a broader view of scholarship per Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990).
- Most stakeholders also agree on the need to maintain and restore professionalism in the faculty role, which concerns such issues as protecting academic freedom, career advancement, equitable pay, professional development and shared governance.
- Despite interest in some proposals—such as creativity contracts, more flexible faculty roles and the creation of consortial hiring arrangements—some stakeholder groups questioned the feasibility of implementation.
- A few hot button issues remain controversial, including phasing out tenure and aligning faculty work with departmental and institutional needs.

Points of agreement among stakeholders

Most stakeholder groups agreed on these proposals:

- Providing multiple pathways or tracks for faculty members to pursue appointments focused on their main responsibilities.
- Differentiating faculty roles among different types of institutions that serve distinct missions.



One key area of consensus: keeping all faculty engaged in some form of scholarship.

- Revising incentives, reward structures and policies to better reflect different institutional priorities.
- Keeping all faculty engaged in some form of scholarship regardless of the faculty member's primary focus.
- Allowing neighboring institutions to create shared, full-time faculty positions.
- Adding teaching-only tenured positions to the faculty.
- Ensuring all faculty members have the same protections for academic freedom, equitable compensation for performing similar duties, and access to needed information and tools.
- Ensuring all faculty have opportunities for professional development, evaluation and promotion.
- Expanding the number of positions that focus more exclusively on either teaching, research or service.
- Granting more flexibility for tenure-track faculty members, such as by allowing them to stop the tenure clock.
- Encouraging more interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty as well as partnerships with communities, businesses, nonprofits and government.
- Encouraging faculty to support low-income and first-generation students through undergraduate research, bridge programs, mentoring and first-year college experiences.

Mixed reactions to proposals

Stakeholder reactions to these proposals were mixed:

- Unbundling teaching roles into course design, delivery, assessment and advising.
- Involving all faculty in shared governance. Nontenure-track faculty and accreditors showed the most interest in this option.

Areas of disagreement

These proposals generated high levels of disagreement among stakeholder groups:

- Phasing out tenure. Tenured faculty and deans see this as a very unattractive option; nontenure-track faculty and other groups see it as either positive or neutral.
- Providing termed tenure, in which faculty members would be given tenure for limited period of time, such as 15 or 20 years.
- Having faculty more closely align their work to departmental and institutional needs rather than on their personal or professional goals and interests. Faculty of all types disagreed with this; policymakers, academic administrators and board members were more in favor.

Phasing out tenure
remains highly
controversial.

About the research

The survey was administered between February and March 2015 through national higher education associations. This overview provides highlights of the results.

To read the full report, click here or go to www.tiaainstitute.org > Audiences > Higher Education.

To read a book that came out of the study, click here or go to rutgerspress.rutgers.edu/product/Envisioning-the-Faculty-for-the-Twenty-first-Century,6045.aspx

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