

AY23-37-F

Faculty Senate Issue Log Form

Date Submitted – March 3, 2024

Title of Issue (a short descriptive title by which the issue may be referenced)* - A Proposal in Support of Academic Freedom: Developing a Path to Tenure for Lecturers

Description of Issue - AAUP's *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* reminds us that "Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good...The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition". The ability to search for and express truth freely is, in turn, dependent on academic freedom in research (the search for truth) and in teaching (the free expression of truth).

Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning.

Academic freedom, in turn, is dependent upon tenure:

Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society.

AAUP specifically defines as tenure-eligible all positions as "Beginning with appointment to the rank of full-time instructor or a higher rank." Footnote 7 in the *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* offers this clarification: "The concept of 'rank of full-time instructor or a higher rank' is intended to include any person who teaches a full-time load regardless of the teacher's specific title".

Rationale for Submission – Please see the AAUP proposal below.

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Date* - March 3, 2024

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A Proposal in Support of Academic Freedom: Developing a Path to Tenure for Lecturers

The ODU chapter of AAUP proposes the development of a path to tenure for full-time faculty currently in the full-time, non-tenure track (NTT) positions of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Master Lecturer.

Why Develop a Path to Tenure for Lecturers?

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Why Here? Why Now?

ODU stands with AAUP in recognizing the importance of tenure to academic freedom. The *ODU Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* notes the purpose of tenure – "The main

purposes of tenure are to protect academic freedom and to enable the University to attract and retain a permanent faculty of distinction in order to accomplish its mission” ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)). Contrary to AAUP standards, however, not all those who teach full-time for ODU are eligible for tenure. The *Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* statement on eligibility for tenure notes that “Only faculty members who hold the ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor are eligible to be considered for tenure” ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)). Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, and Master Lecturers are defined in the ODU Faculty Handbook as full-time positions ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)) and yet they are also identified as contingent faculty:

The academic ranks of lecturer, senior lecturer, and master lecturer do not carry tenure, and time at Old Dominion University in these ranks is not counted as part of the probationary period for tenure. These ranks are intended to meet the University's need to fill special instructional roles that differ from the traditional university faculty role, preparation, and expectation. All appointments and reappointments are contingent upon available funding ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)).

Expectations for Teaching and Service

Those who reach the rank of Senior Lecturer and Master Lecturer differ from “traditional university faculty” in that there is no expectation for research. There is no discernible difference, however, in preparations and expectations with regard to the quality of teaching or service. By the time an individual has reached the level of Master Lecturer, for example, they have served for ten years, teaching at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. It is notable that the *University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness* ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)) found in the *Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* makes no distinction in the quality of teaching expected across tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure track positions.

In addition, in their ten years of service to the university, Master Lecturers must have fulfilled service activities “...normally assigned to or expected of full-time faculty” ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)). Nowhere in the discussion of the evaluation of service in the ODU *Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* is there an indication that expectations for service of NTT faculty members are lower than those for tenure track or tenured faculty ([Office of Academic Affairs \(odu.edu\)](#)). Finally, while it is not clear what is included in “preparation”, it is certain that it would be difficult to meet the specified expectations for teaching and service without a level of preparation equivalent to that of tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Reliance on Full-Time, NTT Faculty

ODU’s reliance on the teaching and service provided by those who hold the rank of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, or Master Lecturer is an important reason for taking this step now.

In terms of teaching, almost a quarter of ODU’s staff (22%) are lecturers. According to data collected from the National Center of Education Statistics, of ODU’s 867 instructional staff, 222

are Full Professors, 216 Associate Professors, 194 are Assistant Professors, and 229 are Lecturers.

In the area of service, it is not difficult to show that those individuals who hold the rank of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, or Master Lecturer, perform service vital to the university. A review in the Summer of 2023, indicated that in five of the six colleges, these individuals serve as Chief Departmental Advisors overseeing the advising of undergraduates in majors in a wide range of departments. They supervise certificates (such as Diversity Studies and Digital Forensics), serve as directors of programs (such as Composition, Literature, Writing Placement and Support), are key to several IDS programs including serving as program coordinators and, for a while, served as Interim Director in the fast-growing School of Cyber Security. Those holding the non-tenurable rank of Lecturer, Master Lecturer, or Senior Lecturer, serve on important university committees such as Threat Management and Policy Review, and on Faculty Senate Committees (for example, Undergraduate Curriculum and Programs which is also chaired by a Senior Lecturer; not to mention the number of NTT Research Assistants and Associates, and Clinical Assistant Professors). The newly created AI Implementation Workgroup which is responsible for crafting policy, developing guidelines for the integration and use of AI technologies, and compliance with AI-related regulations among other responsibilities, includes 3 (out of 10) individuals at the rank of Lecturer/Master Lecturer.

Other reasons for moving forward now include the move to R1 status, the merger with EVMS, and attacks on academic freedom. The increased emphasis on research puts pressure to decrease teaching loads and service loads on tenured and tenure track faculty, increasing the need for, and pressures on, NTT faculty. The upcoming merger with EVMS means a substantial increase in the number of NTT faculty. Finally, Allyn Walker reminds us how vulnerable those without tenure are though no one is safe under financial pressures caused by reductions in state support, attacks on higher education, and decreasing enrollments.

Conclusion

Though achieved by merit, tenure, as the ODU *Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* makes clear and in line with AAUP standards, is available at the university to ensure academic freedom and to provide the university the ability to secure a permanent faculty able to support the good that is a public institution of higher learning. ODU does currently have three ranks among the NTT full-time teaching position of Lecturer, a next step in enhancing our ability to hire quality full-time teaching faculty, retaining quality faculty, enhancing a positive work climate, recognizing the necessity of the work these individuals do, and enhancing academic freedom, is a path to tenure. Some possible solutions:

- Create a new tenured position that Lecturers can be promoted to - “teaching professor”, “professor of practice”
- Convert Master Lecturer position to a tenured position with no change in pay, rank, course load, or professional expectations.

As ODU takes its place among R1 institutions and enhances its reputation by merging with a medical school, the reliance on a faculty dedicated to teaching and service will increase even more. A path to tenure will enhance our ability to hire and retain the teaching faculty we need. Most importantly, a path to tenure will provide that faculty with the security needed to teach the truth. By increasing the number of tenured faculty at the university, a path to tenure for those holding the rank of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Master Lecturer will strengthen the position of faculty of all ranks at the university by strengthening tenure, academic freedom, and the public good that is the university.