One Faculty Serving All Students

All college and university teachers, whether in full- or part-time positions, on or off the tenure track, need to see themselves as members of one faculty working together to provide a quality education to all students.

All faculty members need to receive compensation and institutional support and recognition commensurate with their status as professionals.

• Full- and part-time faculty members teaching off the tenure track are professionals who make indispensable contributions to their institutions.
• In 1970 part-time faculty members represented only 22.0% of all faculty members teaching in United States colleges and universities; in 2011 part-timers represented 50.0%.
• A third of full- and part-time faculty members teaching off the tenure track in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences have been in their current teaching position longer than six years; a fifth or more have held their current position longer than ten years.
• These faculty members function as permanent members of their institutions’ faculties, yet institutions continue to follow personnel and compensation policies based on outdated assumptions that non-tenure-track faculty members are short-term employees who will make up no more than a small proportion of the faculty.
• Despite overwhelming evidence of the professional contributions and permanence of full- and part-time non-tenure-track faculty members, at every point institutions shortchange the members of their faculties who teach off the tenure track and part-time—from hiring to salaries to office space and equipment to opportunities for review of job performance and professional development and advancement.

All long-term faculty members need to be fully enfranchised to participate in planning their departments’ curricula in the areas in which they teach.

• Institutional contracts and personnel policies need to distinguish full- and part-time faculty members who teach off the tenure track on a long-term basis from those employed for one or two years; only the latter can reasonably be regarded as contingent.
• Non-tenure-track faculty members are often not included in curriculum planning, student advising, and other aspects of college life fundamental to sustaining good learning environments and positive departmental cultures.
• Although a substantial portion of non-tenure-track faculty members, including those teaching part-time, are actually permanent members of their departments, their formal institutional status as contingent faculty members impedes their integration into department life.
All faculty members should be aware of the MLA’s recommended standards and guidelines for the academic workforce.

- The number of tenure lines should be sufficient to cover courses in the upper-division undergraduate and graduate curricula and to ensure an appropriate presence of tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the lower division.
- The MLA recommends that 45% of undergraduate course sections in Carnegie doctoral institutions, 55% in master’s institutions, and 70% in baccalaureate institutions be taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty members.
- The MLA recommends that 60% of undergraduate course sections in Carnegie doctoral institutions, 70% in master’s institutions, and 80% in baccalaureate institutions be taught by full-time faculty members (on or off the tenure track). The percentage of course sections taught by full-time faculty members should never drop below the majority of the course sections a department offers in any given semester.
- The MLA recommends minimum compensation for 2013–14 of $7,090 for a standard 3-credit-hour semester course or $4,730 for a standard 3-credit-hour quarter or trimester course. These recommendations are based on a full-time load of 3 courses per semester (6 per year) or 3 courses per quarter or trimester (9 per year); annual full-time equivalent thus falls in a range of $42,540 to $42,570.

All faculty members should have access to key information on academic staffing in their departments and use this information, along with MLA-recommended targets for staffing, contracts, compensation, and working conditions, to advocate change.

- As a profession, as departments, and as individual faculty members and administrators, we need to know the population of undergraduate and (where applicable) graduate students who complete courses in our departments and the allocation of teachers in different employment categories across levels of the curriculum—introductory or general education courses, upper-division courses chiefly for majors, and graduate courses.
- We need to know the policies and procedures departments and institutions follow when hiring faculty members in the different contract categories and the policies for salary increases and benefits, professional review, development, and advancement that apply to faculty members in each category.
- We need to know the contractual arrangements of faculty members teaching in various types of full- and part-time non-tenure-track positions and the number of years individuals in the various contract categories have been in their positions.
- We need to share our findings with the MLA, which will use them to develop anonymous composite portraits of typical local circumstances in different institutional settings.

When all teachers are appropriately compensated and are active participants in curriculum planning, student advising, and campus life, then learning flourishes and student retention and completion rates increase.

For recent data on the academic workforce, please see the figures below. For more information about what you can do, please go to the MLA Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit (www.mla.org/advocacy_kit).
In 1970 part-time faculty members represented only 22.2% of all faculty members teaching in United States postsecondary institutions. In 2011 the percentages of part-timers increased to 50.0% of faculty members in all institutions.

Source: Table 290, Digest of Education Statistics, 2012
Fig. 2. Percentage of Teachers Employed in Full- and Part-Time Positions On and Off the Tenure Track, 2011

When graduate student teaching assistants (TAs) are included, three-fifths or more of the teaching corps in higher education taught part-time in 2011—61.7% in all degree-granting institutions and 59.3% in four-year institutions. Graduate student TAs accounted for 18.2% of teachers in higher education in 2011 and 23.9% in four-year institutions; full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members made up only 23.1% (25.8% in four-year institutions).

Source: Employees by Assigned Position surveys (US Dept. of Educ., IPEDS)
Fig. 4. Percentage of Teachers in All Institutions in Different Employment Categories, 2003–11

Source: Employees by Assigned Position surveys (US Dept. of Educ., IPEDS)
Fig. 5. Percentage of Faculty Members in Four-Year Institutions in Different Employment Categories, 2003–11

Source: Employees by Assigned Position surveys (US Dept. of Educ., IPEDS)
Fig. 6. Percentage of Teachers in Four-Year Institutions in Different Employment Categories, 2003–11

Excluding graduate student TAs, in 2011 just over a quarter of all faculty members—28.2%—were professors in full-time tenured or tenure-track positions, compared with 33.9% in 2003. In four-year institutions the figure is 33.9% in 2011, compared with 42.0% in 2003. As recently as 1995, the United States Department of Education’s Fall Staff Survey (the other human resources component of the IPEDS) found that tenured and tenure-track faculty members made up 51.3% of the faculty in four-year institutions and 42.3% of the faculty in all institutions.

Source: Employees by Assigned Position surveys (US Dept. of Educ., IPEDS)
The proportions of faculty members holding appointments on and off the tenure track vary considerably across the different academic disciplines. From about 30% tenure-track appointments in education to about 60% in political science and economics. In English, about a third of the faculty (excluding graduate student TAs) hold positions on the tenure track; in foreign languages, a little more than two-fifths do.

Source: 2004 NSOPF
Fig. 8: Percentage of Doctorate-Holding Tenure-Line Faculty Members in Twenty-Two Teaching Fields, Four-Year Institutions Only

Source: 2004 NSOPF
track faculty members in English languages and 65.3% in English.

Each faculty member in a non-tenure-track position in English and foreign language is the highest degree held by more than 60% of non-tenure-track members in English and foreign language. A majority of English and foreign language faculty members hold a doctorate in their highest degree, while English and foreign language faculty members hold a master's degree. A smaller percentage of faculty members in foreign languages hold a master's degree, while English and foreign language faculty members hold a master's degree. A master's degree is held by more than 60% of non-tenure-track members in English and foreign language. Among non-tenure-track faculty members, doctorates are held by more than 60% of those in physical and biological sciences. A master's degree is held by more than 60% of non-tenure-track faculty members in all teaching fields, except for English and foreign languages. Among non-tenure-track faculty members in English and foreign language, a master's degree is held by more than 60%. Among non-tenure-track faculty members in all teaching fields, a master's degree is held by more than 60%.