

NTT Contracts: A Proposal

The Intercampus Faculty Council would like to propose the following:

That in order to provide greater stability and recognition for ranked NTT faculty, as well as provide better guidance for appropriate contract length and renewals across diverse campus units, we ask the four campuses to consider a system-level policy on contract length for NTT faculty that offers increasing contract lengths based on the formula below.

Note that we suggest this as a *baseline* policy; it would require units to meet *minimum* standards for contract lengths based on length of time at the university and/or rank. That is, it would *not* preclude granting *longer* contracts as warranted by current unit practices, program needs, faculty performance, and/or recruitment and retention enticements.

Proposed schedule for NTT contract lengths



- A probationary period of *no more than* three one-year contracts;¹
- *No less* than two-year rolling contracts for all ranked NTT faculty at the assistant and associate levels who have worked at the university for three or more years;
- *No less* than three-year rolling contracts for all ranked NTT faculty promoted to full professor, as well as for those ranked NTT faculty who qualify as “the highest qualified, highest performing” (see CRR language below).
 - *For faculty supported primarily by year-to-year external grant funding, the requirement for three-year rolling contracts can be modified subject to review by the unit dean and/or the Provost.*

Rationale

A. The CRRs and ranked NTT contract length

The UM Collected Rules and Regulations provide the following framework for ranked NTT contract length:

310.035 H. Contract Length

NTT faculty appointments shall begin at a specified date and terminate at a specified date. Such appointments are usually for a period of one academic year but may be for a longer or shorter period, except no single term appointment shall be for a period longer than three years. Such three-year appointments should be reserved for the highest qualified, highest performing NTT faculty members.

While the CRR sets an expectation for a minimum contract length (one academic year) and allows for up to three-year contracts for ranked NTTs, it does not provide further guidance for variable contract length beyond the caveat that three-year contracts be reserved for “the highest qualified, highest performing NTT faculty members.”

However, the ranked NTT system and the promotion process within it is predicated on an evaluation of NTT job performance over time, with full professorial rank as the clearest expression

¹ It is presumed that NTT faculty achieve successful performance evaluation in accordance with CRR 310.035(I) during their probationary period.

of merit for inclusion among the “highest qualified, highest performing NTT faculty members.” Thus it would make sense to tie an increasing contract length to promotion within the professorial ranks. But there is also the issue of years of service. As ranked NTT faculty are *not* required to go up for promotion, it is problematic to tie contract length solely to promotion and rank. Further, the IFC NTT Committee has reviewed data that suggests that some units do not actively support the promotion of ranked NTT faculty.

B. Ranked NTT faculty stability and recognition

Ranked NTT faculty represent a significant percentage of overall University of Missouri faculty. The stability of NTT faculty directly impacts the stability of our programs and departments, where ranked NTTs often play critical roles across our teaching, research, extension, and clinical missions. In the Schools of Journalism, Health Professions, and Medicine, NTTs constitute the majority of total ranked faculty; in Nursing, half; and in the College of Veterinary Medicine, 40%. It is also worth noting that NTT-Research faculty often exist on soft money and generate funding for their programs and divisions. Finally, ranked NTT contribute in significant numbers to service at all levels of the institution.

Yet despite this, the contract lengths of ranked NTTs across and within the campuses remain highly irregular, with variability even *within* colleges and divisions. A more consistent system-wide policy for contract length would both provide a greater sense of stability for those faculty and the divisions who depend upon them; it would also go some way towards a more consistent recognition of the contributions made by ranked NTT faculty, especially in a challenging fiscal environment.

C. Ranked NTT faculty and “contract non-renewal”: the need for rolling contracts

The move to rolling contracts for faculty beyond the probationary period would give NTT faculty the same additional transition year of employment that is now provided to tenure-track faculty who are dismissed before obtaining tenure. This extra year for tenure-track faculty is presumably in acknowledgement of the schedule for the academic job market. Many NTT faculty who learn of their dismissal in the spring semester will have missed the majority of the hiring season for their academic fields. NTT faculty typically receive notice of their non-renewal in late February (or later, if on 12-month contracts; campus policy only requires notification of non-renewal three months before the end of the current contract), which strongly disadvantages their potential transition to other jobs for the following academic year.

Concerning “Proposed Schedule for NTT Contract Lengths”

From Dean of Pharmacy, Explaining an Alternative system

Our clinical NTT faculty prepare and submit promotion dossiers through a process almost identical to the TT faculty. We even require external evaluations just like TT faculty, but we also include external evaluations of their clinical service depending upon where their primary practice site is located. Then, our P&T Committee reviews our NTT faculty and makes recommendations regarding their achievement with regard to our established promotion guidelines, which are actually found in the same document as our TT P&T guidelines. The division chair also reviews all this information and the chair and committee’s recommendations are sent to me to review. Again, exact same process as our TT’s, but it concludes with my decision, and I send my detailed review to the provost regarding my decision. Of course, the provost could always trump my decision should she so choose.

If clinical NTT are recommended for promotion from Clinical Assistant Professor to Clinical Associate Professor, then they become eligible for a three year contract beginning the next academic year. If they are recommended for promotion from Clinical Associate Professor to Clinical Professor, then they become eligible for a three year rolling contract.

We are very well aware of the implications for these extended contracts. But, we know they are consistent with CRR, and we also know that when we have to remove an NTT faculty member for poor performance or other issues, the process could potentially be long and drawn out like you stated below. As a side bar, I have had discussions with the provost (and previous provost) that we should consider a campus-wide Promotion Advisory Committee for NTT that would function in a similar way as the campus Promotion & Tenure Advisory Committee, so that these could be reviewed at the campus level as well. That might provide more protection for the university as well.

In my opinion, this process provides a nice incentive for clinical NTT faculty and helps them feel engaged and a real part of this university—they do comprise, after all, about 2/3 of our entire faculty. Also, it helps us remain competitive for clinical NTT faculty among all the colleges and schools of pharmacy, many of which offer up some incentive like this.

I think the benefits far outweigh the risks.

Our other two divisions in the school, the basic science divisions, are mostly TT faculty. We do have a couple of research NTT faculty, however. But, they are not on rolling or extended contracts. I am reluctant to pursue that for research NTT as we might have them dependent upon extramural funding at some point and their primary responsibilities are clearly research.

Linda Mitchell's Concerns and Recommendations Based on Personal Observation and Discussions with Faculty

My Concerns:

- My main problem with the document: It assumes the MU position is the DEFAULT. The situation at the Columbia campus is different from the situations that exist at the other three campuses. Indeed, the other three might be more the “norm” for the system with MU as the aberration because of its size. UMKC has particular concerns because of the significant level of complexity of this campus.
- The push is to have a policy that does not require any CRR or by-laws changes. I think this is the wrong way to go about this. NTTs have to be clearly defined in ways that differentiate them entirely from TT faculty in simple ways that legislators can understand. If we have any blurry lines between the two kinds of positions, that is the wedge that the Get-Rid-of-Tenure crowd will drive a tank through.
- There is nothing in the policy that addresses the real problem of unranked NTT faculty and how to move them to ranked positions—because that would require by-laws and CRR changes. This is a real problem for me—and I know for Diane Filion, who has been wrestling with this for years. Unranked NTT are not accorded the kind of decency that we expect all contract full-time faculty to receive: they are not eligible for paid FMLA and there are other restrictions on their benefits packages. There is also no real mechanism for moving qualified unranked NTT faculty into ranked lines. If we are talking about a humane policy, this is a glaring omission.
- Jerry has pointed out that the termination for cause process is linked to the TT guidelines for same. Not only is this a problem procedurally—in part because the process is so onerous that the decision would likely be to retain the malefactor in his/her position until the contract runs out—but it also blurs the line between NTT and TT faculty in worrying ways: another wedge.
- Some of the feedback I have received is that chairs will feel constrained about making choices on the fly if NTT faculty have rolling contracts and one-year termination agreements (in other words, they get a year instead of three months once they achieve the magic 3-year status of having a rolling contract). If this probationary period were to resemble that of assistant professors—in other words 5 years--then this ceases to be a real issue, because if one has retained a faculty member for 5+ years as a ranked NTT person, the likelihood of failing to retain that person is low. If senior appointments—at the Associate or Full rank—were to have a 2-3 year probationary period, which often happens at the tenure level, this would make more sense.
- Although it says in the CRRs that NTT workloads cannot resemble those of TT faculty, we all know that the failure to define what that means is a problem. We also know that NTTs are

doing jobs that are often very similar to some in tenured positions. Members of the legislature interested in getting rid of tenure might see the relationship between these two things as nugatory.

My Recommendations

- Slow down the process and really think about the need for by-laws and new or revised CRRs that relate specifically to NTT faculty and do not blur the distinctions between TT and NTT
- Create new CRRs or SoPs that outline the steps by which unranked but qualified NTT faculty can move into ranked positions
- Create new CRRs that specify removal for cause that does NOT take longer than simply not renewing a three-year rolling contract