

Exploring Faculty Dispositions When Long-Term Contracts Are Offered Instead of Tenure Across an Institution

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This article examines faculty job security and satisfaction at a burgeoning public college that offers faculty long-term contracts for the ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor, but does not offer tenure to any faculty. Through focus groups, interviews, and a survey of over 100 faculty, we find that promotion in conjunction with long-term contracts at this non-tenure-granting institution offers faculty moderate levels of job security and satisfaction, particularly for men. Promotion may have different effects on security and satisfaction, depending on gender and the degree to which the respondents believe they understand their contract. Since the faculty's contract satisfaction is associated with their perceived understanding of its terms, we argue that it is important that those terms be transparent at this institution and others that may implement a similar long-term contract structure.

Keywords: tenure, promotion, long-term contracts, job security, job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Job security is a significant component of job satisfaction, and in academe, tenure and promotion practices have long been viewed as providing de facto job security for mid- and late-career faculty. However, little research has been done on faculty at institutions that provide promotion without also offering tenure. This article examines a case study of over 100 faculty at a rare public, four-year institution—"No Tenure University," or "NTU"—that has never offered tenure to any faculty. In this case study at NTU, we demonstrate how promotion, considered separately from tenure, may develop legitimacy among a faculty body and provide job security, particularly as they move into a late career; however, we argue that these promotion practices must be combined with long-term, renewable contracts and clear communication about the contract terms. Faculty at NTU, who are eligible for promotion through the traditional ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor on long-term contracts, largely enjoy job security, though their own satisfaction with their jobs is sometimes overshadowed by perceived negative stereotypes of their non-tenure-track jobs from their peers in tenure-line jobs. With long-term, renewable appointments

and comparable working conditions to tenure-track faculty (travel funding; adequate salaries; faculty governance), NTU faculty in our case study who are clearest about the terms of their contracts feel the most secure, and gender may skew that perception. More and better communication, improved marketing, and clearer information about contract terms are needed to ensure more faculty can understand and feel secure in NTT positions at NTU, as confusion or insecurity about contract terms may lead to job dissatisfaction, particularly among women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tenure Provides Job Security for a Minority of Faculty

Faculty regularly lament the weakening of the tenure system (Besosa, et. al, 2009; Bosquet, 2008; Trower, 2002), particularly as the tenure-track job opportunity remains the goal of newly minted Ph.D.s seeking academic positions (Terosky & Gonzales, 2016; Trower 2002). However, tenure continues its steep decline, with only about a third of all faculty tenured or tenure-track, according to The Chronicle of Higher Education (2021). Fewer than ten percent of faculty hold tenure at many institutions, with the expectation that tenure is reserved for faculty who will move into administration (Besosa, et. al, 2009). Traditionally, tenure is considered the apex of the academic profession, “the strongest form of job security” (Flood & Leap, 2018, p.81). Bozeman and Gaughan (2011), note that “Tenure implies senior status and by definition means job security,” (p. 158), which they cite as an essential requirement of job satisfaction.

Even for the minority of faculty who are granted tenure, it does not provide the same level of job security that it may once have. For early career faculty, the job security is minimal; in the ill-famed “up-or-out” system, about 20% of junior professors who go up for tenure are unsuccessful (Williams & Williams, 2006), leaving them jobless and personally devastated (Alleman, et. al, 2019), after pursuing rigorous Ph.D. programs in which half of graduate students drop out (Flood & Leap, 2018, p.29). In addition, tenure may lead faculty members to have lower salaries than other highly trained professionals, largely because tenure is viewed as its own type of compensation (Brown & Kurland, 1990). Following tenure, associate professors often become “terminal associates,” as they are saddled with much of the service work that assistant professors are spared from (Gardner & Blackstone, 2013; Veliz & Gardner, 2019; Terosky, O’Meara, & Campbell, 2014). Though faculty rally around tenure as a means of protecting academic freedom, there are rare instances of this protection occurring, while faculty with tenure are still dismissed, as in the case of tenured professor David Walton, a leading union organizer at Lake Sumter College whose contract was not renewed because of tenuous curriculum reasons (Galbraith, 2021). Other states, like the University System of Georgia, which houses twenty-five tenure-granting institutions, have enacted sweeping post-tenure-review measures that may weaken tenure protections (American Association of University Professors, 2021).

As one might expect, administrators increasingly fight against tenure, particularly because those faculty without tenure are viewed as cheaper labor and allow for more institutional flexibility (Flood & Leap, 2018); in addition, agreeing to a de-facto lifetime contract is daunting (Youn & Price, 2009). Tenure, however, will likely remain in place—albeit primarily for elite academics at competitive or wealthy institutions (Besosa, et. al, 2009; Zemsky, 2008). Zemsky (2008) argues that public outcry against tenure and the for-profit model of higher education endangers tenure, but only for public institutions—not for private research institutions and their foremost professors, who will remain tenured, while most faculty now are untenured or off the tenure track. Tenure, imagined as a protected status for those at very rich or very powerful colleges, may further widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots of academe, particularly as the vast majority of tenured faculty at public colleges already sign annual contracts, a point that will be explored in detail later.

Problematic Comparisons Between Non-Tenure-Track (NTT) and Tenure-Track (TT) Faculty

Tenure also leads to fissures among faculty in institutions that do not offer tenure to everyone. NTT faculty and TT faculty working alongside each other at tenure-granting institutions show divisions among faculty, as many colleges find their faculty stratified into two categories: those with tenure, and those

without. Research conducted on NTT faculty is typically done on NTT faculty in comparison to TT peers at the same institution (Ott & Cisneros, 2015; Webber & Rogers, 2018). NTT faculty, even in full-time positions, are widely perceived to be “second-class citizens” as compared to TT faculty (Estep, 2021; Fleming, et. al, 2005; Haviland, 2017; Trower 2002). In an examination of separate “clinical-educator” tracks as compared to traditional faculty “clinical researchers” in medical schools, Fleming, et. al, finds that “Conceptualizing this track as separate but equal to the clinician-researcher track, and using the same yardstick to determine value, will continue to be problematic” with those on the educator-focused track viewed as a ‘second-class citizenry’” (2005, p. 1103). In further examining this hierarchy, it becomes clear that the lack of tenure is not the main issue, but the existence of a dividing line upon which comparisons between NTT and TT faculty occur. In a survey of state and system leaders of institutions, Maxey and Kezar (2015) found that “eliminating faculty hierarchies” was believed “to offer greater parity through more stable employment, equitable compensation, professional development, and participation in the life of the campus” (p. 583). NTT faculty at tenure-granting institutions tend to receive worse treatment than TT faculty at tenure-granting institutions because of their lack of tenure status, and because the former often teach course loads that may be double their TT peers for less compensation and fewer benefits (Besosa, et. al, 2009; Flood & Leap, 2018; Kezar, 2012). Many tenure advocates believe the best solution to improving NTT faculty employment conditions is to convert NTT jobs into TT jobs, a practice that is extremely rare (Besosa, et. al, 2009) and unlikely to gain ground. Focusing on the nearly unanimous values of preserving academic freedom and faculty governance can get both TT and NTT faculty on board, but problems in the hierarchy may still exist (Maxey & Kezar, 2015).

Given that a tenured position is the goal of most early faculty and graduate students (Terosky & Gonzales, 2016; Trower, 2002), NTT faculty at tenure-granting institutions face harmful preconceptions about their job status. NTT faculty are expected to perform worse than TT faculty in all aspects of their job, even though this expectation is rarely realized (Kezar & Sam, 2011). Especially as many NTT faculty focus on teaching, they are often framed “as laborers and not as professionals” (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 1421). Contingent faculty typically have less academic freedom and voice in the institution; as a result, they feel less connected to their colleges (Besosa, et. al, 2009), pushed to the “periphery of the collegium” (Haviland, 2017). Women are underrepresented on the tenure track (Bohon & Nagle, 2019), often falling into NTT jobs because of caregiving responsibilities (Webber & Rogers, 2018), and sometimes “comprise a noticeably disadvantaged (sometimes embittered) faculty subgroup” (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002, p. 145). In one study, non-tenured faculty displayed higher levels of emotional labor compared to those faculty that did have tenured positions, with female faculty experiencing more stress over this emotional labor than male faculty (Tunguz, 2016). NTT faculty of color have higher expectations about participating in and/or upholding diversity initiatives (Miller & Struve 2020). These NTT faculty often function without the fundamental structures that support faculty, such as offices, Faculty Senate representation, and travel funding, that their tenured peers have.

Despite these low expectations and limited resources, non-tenure-track faculty at tenure-granting institutions tend to perform at levels comparable to or superior to their tenured or tenure-track peers as teachers, which tends to be their primary role. Many NTT faculty whose original intention was to be employed at universities classified as “Very High Research Activity” (R1), but instead were employed at non-R1 universities, redefine themselves as educators instead of researchers, finding joy and satisfaction in their teaching-intensive jobs, particularly to underserved populations (Terosky & Gonzales, 2016). Approaches to teaching—including pedagogical training and time spent in preparation of courses—between NTT and TT faculty has been shown to be comparable (Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011). In fact, the expectations of full-time non-tenure track jobs are often similar to TT faculty in terms of teaching or other responsibilities (Brown & Kurland, 1990). NTT faculty tend to be excellent teachers, and it is likely that many are excellent researchers as well. However, little research has been conducted on the research productivity of NTT faculty in comparable conditions of TT faculty, because NTT faculty tend to focus on teaching (Haviland, 2017; Kezar and Sam, 2011).

Adjunct, contingent, term, clinical-track, and teaching-track faculty tend to be lumped into a single category of “NTT faculty,” with few distinctions made among working conditions and length of

appointment or contract. The adjunct professor teaching one course on a one-semester contract for a fraction of the compensation of their tenured peers is considered in the same category as a full professor on a five-year renewable appointment, with a competitive salary, full benefits, an office, a travel stipend, and a half-load course release for serving as President of the Faculty Senate—simply because neither faculty member has tenure. The former working conditions are abysmal; however, the latter conditions seem almost ideal. Adrianna Kezar and Daniel Maxey (2012) note that researchers may know more about NTT faculty than institution administrators; as a group, the wide-ranging group of “NTT faculty” often feel invisible, though this may change as increasing percentages of higher education faculty are part of the tenure-free universe (Kezar & Maxey, 2012). In reality, many NTT faculty positions resemble tenure-track jobs in terms of the expectation of long-term employment, institutional service, and even research requirements. In fact, when faced with a ten-year renewable contract or tenure, most faculty found that they were indistinguishable and would choose either one (Trower, 2002). Some NTT faculty have renewable contracts of five years; these faculty hold long-term contract, or LTC, jobs, a category that should be separate from the lumped-together term of “contingent faculty” (Estep, 2021).

When Comparison Is Taken Away: Examination of Faculty at Institutions Without Tenure

As we have established, many discussions of NTT faculty fall short because they focus on the working conditions of the myriad types of NTT faculty at institutions that grant tenure; thus, NTT often feel “second class” in relation to their TT peers. But what about when the comparison point is taken away, and faculty only work alongside other NTT faculty? Such tenure-free colleges are rare, and tenure-free public colleges are almost nonexistent. As of 2002, there were only eighty-eight colleges across the country that did not offer tenure, and most were private colleges; none were major universities, and only a handful were public colleges (Chait & Chait 2005). However, many NTT faculty positions at non-tenure-granting institutions resemble tenure-track jobs in terms of the expectation of long-term employment and citizenship in their university. Renewable contracts of five or ten years, or “evergreen” contracts that mimic tenure protections are often seen as equivalent to tenure and can mimic the employment safety of tenure (Chait, 2002), which Youn and Price characterize as a minimum “thirty-year contract” (2009, p. 212).

It may be that administrators seeking to improve working conditions for NTT faculty should focus less on the label of “non-tenure-track,” which may cause bias against those faculty, and examine more closely the material conditions, contract structure, promotion opportunities, and support for the NTT employee. While NTT faculty at tenure-granting institutions may be dissatisfied with their positions in comparison to their TT or tenured peers, that same job dissatisfaction is not present for NTT faculty at non-tenure-granting colleges (Chait, 2002; Estep, 2021; Mbuva, 2019). Faculty surveyed at non-tenure-granting institutions have previously reported high levels of satisfaction (Sanderson et. al, 1999, p. 16). They are satisfied with their job and work conditions, particularly their freedom in the classroom without an overemphasis on research, and do not worry about job security when faculty are rarely fired (Chait 2002; Estep 2021; Mbuva 2019). The reality is that research shows many NTT faculty at non-tenure-granting institutions are satisfied with their positions.

Decoupling “Promotion” and “Tenure” in Examining Job Security of Mid- to Late-Career Faculty

Just as little research has been done on NTT faculty outside tenure-granting institutions, little research has been conducted on how the option of being promoted up the traditional ranking system of assistant, associate, and full professor, may or may not lead to NTT faculty job satisfaction or security. So often, the dual practices of “promotion and tenure” are viewed in academe as symbiotic. There are few institutions where the leap from the at-rank position of assistant or associate professor is disentangled from the additional step of tenure. Youn & Price (2009) note that there can and should be some separation between tenure and promotion: “It becomes apparent that two different categories of rules are at work. The logic of tenure rules may be not easily reconcilable with the logic of promotion rules” (Youn & Price, 2009, p. 232). Participating in both tenure and promotion “rituals” is believed to provide institutions a pathway to prestige and legitimacy in academia (Youn & Price, 2009, p. 233). However, it is difficult to evaluate the role that

promotion plays in job satisfaction because tenure practices and faculty promotion are so often examined simultaneously.

Evaluations of late career faculty satisfaction explicitly center on those with tenure because many NTT jobs do not provide meaningful pathways to promotion (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; McNaughtan et. al 2022). Because tenure is synonymous with job security, tenure is taken for granted to be shorthand for the establishment of trust, which McNaughtan et. al (2022), identified as one of the two most fulfilling aspects of a tenured professor's career (personal efficacy is the other). Therefore, it seems obvious that NTT faculty in term-limited positions could not be job secure, or satisfied, and that many contingent faculty, given the ranks of "Instructor" or "Lecturer" without the opportunity to progress in their jobs, would be dissatisfied with their lack of upward mobility. Even tenured faculty who believe they have plateaued in their institutions tend to be less satisfied and less connected to their institution (Drucker-Godard, et. al 2016). It is not clear what role promotion, considered alone, plays in providing senior faculty with job security and satisfaction.

These practices of "promotion and tenure" must be decoupled to display which practice, exactly, leads to faculty satisfaction, or if each practice provides distinct types of faculty satisfaction. What of LTC faculty who receive promotion, but not tenure? Setting aside tenure, can at-rank faculty members find job satisfaction and job security in traditional promotion practices? We argue that the traditional at-rank position, without tenure, provides sufficient job security for LTC faculty in our case study, who are promoted along the traditional ranks from assistant to full professor. However, security or satisfaction in such an environment may require more focused and deliberate explanations of employment terms, and increased transparency, to create faculty trust.

A New Type of Institution: Our Case for Study

"No Tenure University," NTU, the focus of this case study, is a four-year, public, liberal arts college that enrolls approximately 11,000 students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, 440 full-time faculty, and 130 part-time faculty. The college was founded in the early twenty-first century to support a growing need for an institution of higher education in the southeastern United States in a large metropolitan region (Early History, 2022). As a new institution of higher education, NTU capitalized on its opportunity to innovate by employing a novel faculty employment structure: an appointment model that hybridized the offerings of a traditional tenure-granting university with those of a non-tenure granting, teaching-focused institution. At NTU, faculty are evaluated in four areas instead of the traditional three: teaching, research, service, and student engagement.

Most full-time faculty participate in a LTC structure of employment with renewable lines for assistant, associate, and full professors. Assistant professors typically receive three-year, renewable appointments that are not associated with tenure, and which do not automatically renew. Assistant professors are eligible to apply for promotion after completing their fifth year of service in the role. However, they are not required to apply for promotion and, in practice, may, instead, opt to remain at the assistant professor level indefinitely, pending renewal of their three-year appointment. In addition, they may apply for promotion to associate professor, fail to be awarded the promotion, and remain at the level of assistant professor until they seek promotion again (if they choose to). Thus, the promotion process from assistant to associate professor at NTU, decoupled from tenure, provides room for error; in historical practice, it has meant a faculty member can fail at a promotion attempt and try again indefinitely, without being demoted or dismissed from the institution.

If promotion is awarded, the associate position comes with a five-year rolling appointment, as well as a \$3,000 increase in annual salary. Another operational benefit of the promotion is that, pending good standing, the five-year appointments have, in practice, been renewed biennially so that they reset to year one of five every other year. This reset practice was codified in the NTU Faculty Handbook in 2022, two years after the survey that we will analyze here was administered. Similarly, associates may apply for promotion to full professor after five years of service in their role. Full professors receive the same five-year rolling appointments as associate professors as well as another \$6,000 raise upon promotion.

Regardless of the length of their appointment, faculty at NTU, like nearly all faculty at public institutions, sign annual contracts. Faculty in forty-nine states (excluding Vermont), and including NTU's home state, require faculty to sign a new contract every year since they are state employees (see Appendix B). This annual signature is required because the state's Department of Revenue is prohibited from entering into agreements that have automatic renewals such that state funds are or would be obligated in subsequent years without the option of the department to affirmatively renew them (Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 50-5-64.1(a)(2)(E)). This rule, and the subsequent requirement for NTU to have annual contracts for faculty, stem from NTU's state constitution requirement that state budgets be balanced – a practice that 49 states have adopted in one way or another (Georgia State Constitution, Article 3, Section 9, Paragraph IV (b)).

METHODS

To understand how NTT faculty at a non-tenure-granting institution perceive the promotion practices and the impact those practices have on their feelings of contract satisfaction, job security, and professional legitimacy, we examined full-time, at-rank faculty at NTU. We conducted a mixed-methods analysis leveraging structured focus group interviews of select faculty, self-reported satisfaction surveys, and administrative data containing demographic, compensation, and faculty rank information.

Structured Focus Groups and Faculty Survey

To understand the perceptions of faculty career satisfaction and outlook, we conducted focus groups of select faculty, with each interview session including faculty of the same rank: instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. Each rank consisted of one group of faculty except for assistant professors, who were interviewed in two separate groups since this position held the highest implications due to the potential for promotion to associate professor, which is considered the largest leap in career progression. Each focus group consisted of between four and seven faculty members with a range of demographic characteristics across several college disciplines. Also, the study team conducted eight additional interviews with key faculty with unique perspectives, including two from each of the following categories:

1. Faculty who were present for the founding year of the institution who made significant contributions to the college's development;
2. Faculty who had given up tenure at another institution in favor of NTU's new and developing academic environment;
3. Faculty promoted at NTU from assistant professor to associate professor (non-tenured) at the five or six year mark; and
4. Faculty who remained in the assistant professor rank after the five or six year mark.

After conducting structured focus groups and interviews (see appendix C for interview questions), we developed and administered a faculty feedback survey to full-time faculty and received 111 complete responses (out of 430 full-time faculty). The survey questions can be found in Appendix A. This survey focused on faculty perceptions of self and of faculty peers on job satisfaction, job roles, workloads, career progression, and mobility.

Administrative Data

The data from the survey included 120 complete observations; see tables 1 and 2 for demographic summary statistics.

TABLE 1
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Variable	Freq.	Percent
Male	40	36.36
Female	50	45.45
Unknown Gender	20	18.18
White	69	62.73
African American	5	4.55
Asian	4	3.64
Other Race	4	3.64
Unknown Race	28	25.45

NTU, in addition to full-time faculty, employs 130 faculty who are part-time. There is also an increase in the number of “lecturer” positions, which are full-time, unranked positions that typically have an additional teaching load, less pay, and no research requirement. These contingent positions, of course, mean that there is a hierarchy of faculty positions at NTU: with at-rank positions versus less secure faculty positions of lecturer and part-time faculty. We did not include the lecturer and part-time faculty in our analysis because we wanted to focus in on the unique subset of NTT faculty in at-rank positions at a non-tenure-granting institution. Understanding the working conditions, job satisfaction, and job security of lecturer and part-time faculty at non-tenure-granting institutions is crucial, but it is outside the scope of this project.

TABLE 2
SAMPLE FACULTY POSITIONS

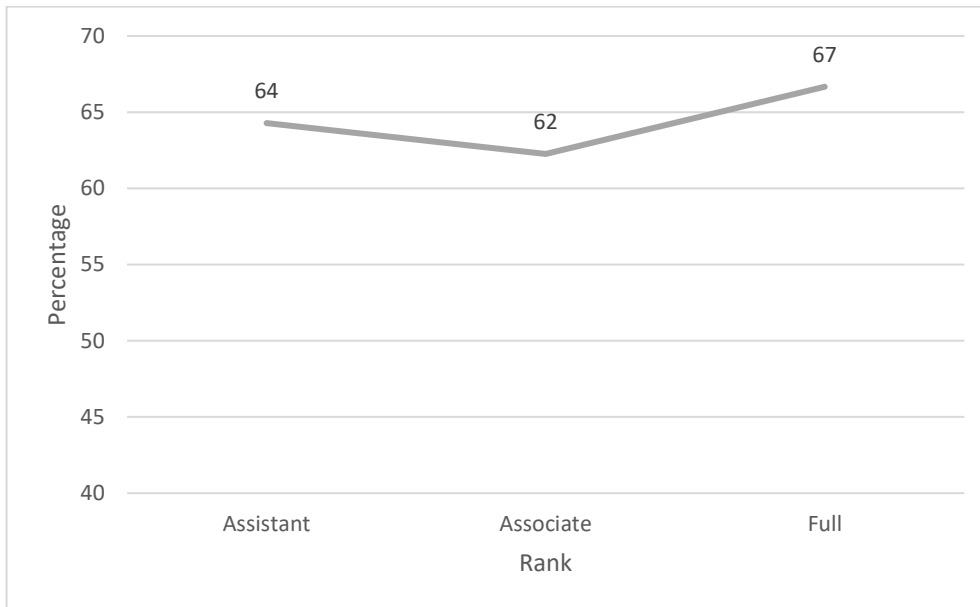
Variable	Freq.	Percent
Instructor	6	5.00
Assistant Professor	28	23.33
Associate Professor	54	45.00
Full Professor	19	15.83
Prefer not to say	3	2.50

ANALYSIS

As a new regional college that has never offered tenure, NTU provides a rare opportunity to analyze an alternative faculty employment model. By looking at NTU faculty perceptions of their employment contracts and comparison to their peers, we have assessed how NTU faculty perceive their job security and satisfaction. The aim of the project is to assess the degree to which LTC faculty, outside a tenure system, can find job security and satisfaction as they progress through their career and get promoted. We first address job security and contract satisfaction across academic rank and then examine how LTC perceive their jobs in comparison to tenure-line faculty at other institutions. Finally, we analyze the degree to which differences in gender or academic discipline play a role in the above-mentioned perceptions.

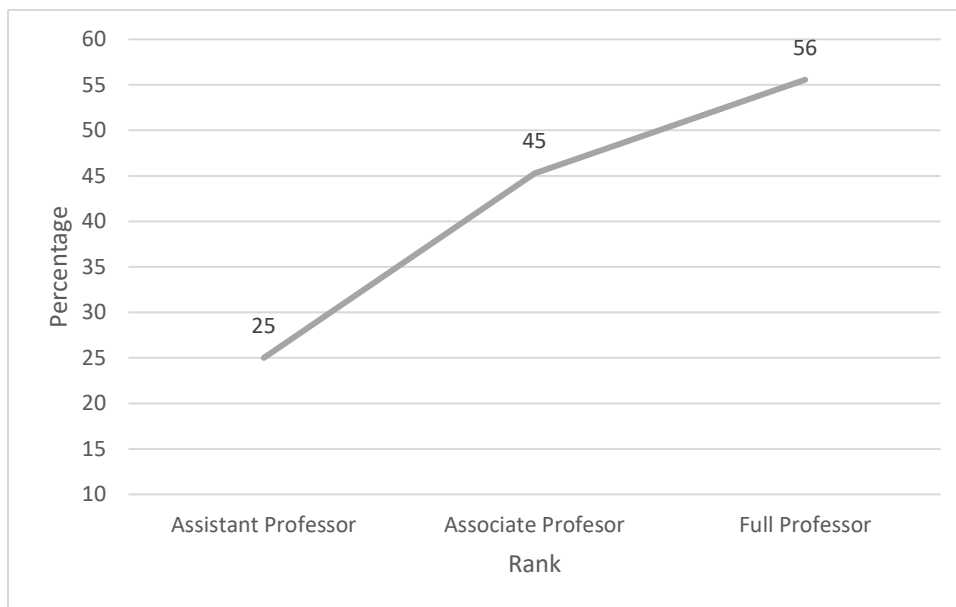
Job Security, Contract Satisfaction, and Career Progression

FIGURE 1
FEELINGS OF JOB SECURITY BY RANK



As tenure is often valued for its synonymy with job security, it is essential to examine how secure at-rank NTU faculty feel in their positions; survey results indicate that academics at an institution that does not promise tenure still feel a relatively high level of job security. Regardless of rank, roughly two-thirds of respondents feel secure or very secure in their job, though a sizeable minority report feeling insecure, a percentage that is somewhat constant even as faculty increase in rank (Figure 1). In addition, faculty at NTU feel relatively secure in their jobs throughout the career cycle. Although assistant professors have a slightly more polarized view, with 4% reporting neutral feelings toward security compared to 9% and 6% for the other ranks, respectively, feelings of security seem constant across ranks. It is possible that assistant professors who are not expected to jump the hurdle of tenure feel more secure in their positions than they might in a traditional system, in which keeping their job depended on promotion or tenure. As associate professors are more likely to have heavy service loads and to become “terminal associates,” (Gardner & Blackstone, 2013; Terosky, O’Meara, & Campbell, 2014; Veliz & Gardner, 2019), these professors may not feel confident in their ability to continue progressing in their careers. Additional service loads coupled with more personal responsibilities, especially for those with young children, it is possible that the drop in security stems from an overload of service.

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE OF NTU FACULTY WHO INDICATE THEY “RARELY” SPEND TIME
CONSIDERING THEIR JOB SECURITY



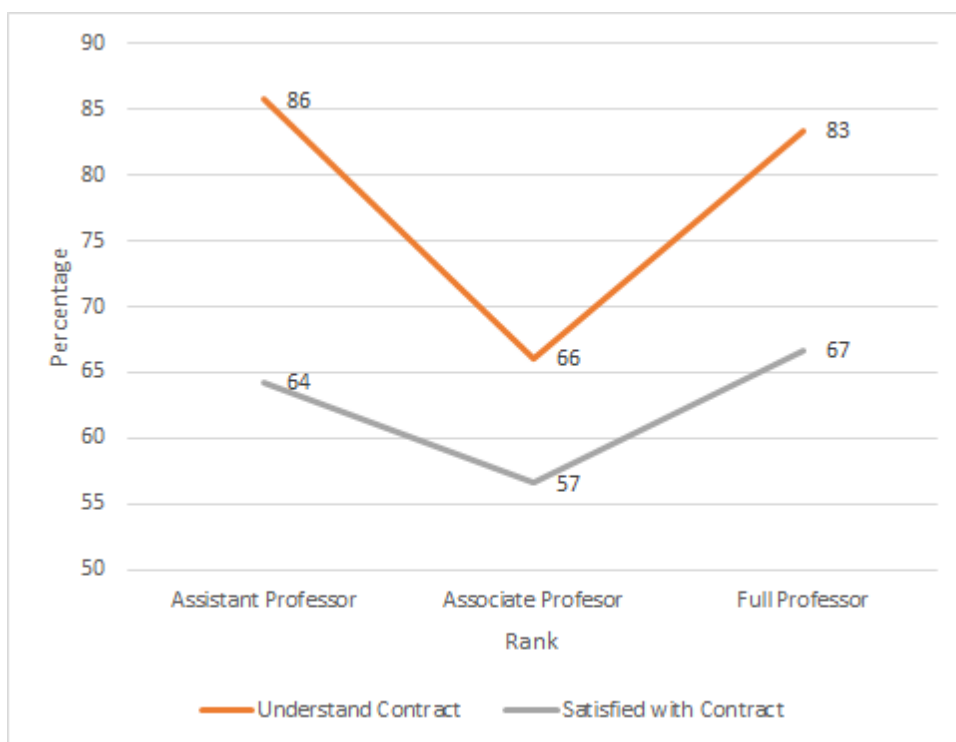
Although rank promotion does not necessarily lead to explicitly stated feelings of job security, higher-ranking professors are more likely to think about their job security “rarely.” Figure 2 shows that as faculty move up in rank, they indicate that they spend, on average, less time thinking about job security. Only twenty-five percent of assistant professors note that they very rarely (14.29%) or rarely (10.71%) think about job security, whereas 45% of associate professors note that they very rarely (24.53%) or rarely (20.75%) think about it, and 56% of full professors note that they very rarely (38.89%) or rarely (16.67%) think it (Figure 2). While they are not explicitly indicating they feel “more secure,” it appears that job security is on their minds less. Since feelings of job security, for most of our sample, stay consistent across ranks, results suggest that as they move up in rank, NTU faculty are spending less mental energy feeling just as secure.

It may also be important to disaggregate these data by gender and rank, as they also play a role in feelings of job security at NTU. At the assistant level, 50% of men indicate that they are insecure, whereas only 27% of women report insecurity. Interestingly, that relationship is flipped at the associate professor rank, with women (52%) being almost five times as likely as men (14%) to indicate that they are insecure in their jobs. The sample not sufficiently large to draw conclusions at the full professor level where 78% of women (n=9) and 60% of men (n=5) report feelings of security in their job. These results suggest that promotion generally has a positive impact on security, but that men feel that impact after the first promotion, to associate professor, but women do not experience the same impact until the second promotion, to full professor. A longitudinal study tracking individual members over their career progression could show the extent to which promotion alone affects individual faculty members, as could additional research into how NTT jobs at non-tenure-granting institutions impact women. It may be that women on and off the tenure track, who—along with people of color—have been the most dissatisfied with the tenure system (Mallon, 2002) and the pressure of tenure and promotion (Sax et al., 1996), and who are more likely than men to find themselves off the tenure track (Baldwin & Chronister, 2002; Webber et. al, 2018) have not found relief in a promotion system outside tenure.

The overall takeaway from these results, however, is the indication that most faculty at NTU feel relatively secure in their jobs, with two in three feeling “secure” or “very secure” in their job. Several reasons could account for these feelings of security. One factor could be the nature or perceived nature of

government positions as being more secure or resilient in volatile times compared to private sector jobs. Another is the fact that the college is positioned in a rapidly growing, extremely diverse suburban county promising long-term demand for higher education combined with the optimism of the growth phase of any institution. Finally, the focus groups and interviews indicated that faculty rarely heard of their colleagues' appointments not being renewed. Also, of course, is the lack of comparison to colleagues who do have tenure; when individuals see themselves as holding the primary faculty position at their institution, they may also see themselves as more essential and thus feel more secure in their jobs. Whatever reason is the primary cause, a significant finding is that a large majority of the faculty at an institution that does not provide tenure feel secure in their job, with fewer than one in three reporting job insecurity.

FIGURE 3
OVERALL CONTRACT SATISFACTION AND UNDERSTANDING



The employment contract is crucial to any analysis of job security at NTU given the absence of tenure and the positioning of the public institution in a state that has passed not only a right-to work law, which is common, but also one that explicitly bans labor organizations for state employees. When asked about their contracts, most faculty, regardless of rank, indicate that they are satisfied with their contracts. However, rank is seen to impact faculty satisfaction with their contract, and in a rather unexpected way. We saw a measurable dip in contract satisfaction from the assistant (64%) to the associate (57%) level that rebounds at the full professor (67%) level (Figure 3). Since associates receive an objectively preferable appointment contract upon promotion from the assistant professor level (five years instead of three), these results may seem baffling until they are charted along reports of contract understanding (Figure 3). Assistant professors feel very confident about their understanding of their contract (with 86% of assistant professors reporting they either fully or partially understand their contract). That understanding is significantly lower (66%) among associate professors. Yet full professors reverse the trend, with 83% indicating they fully or partially understand their contract. These results follow the Dunning-Kruger effect as newer learners (assistant professors) feel a high degree of confidence about their understanding of a concept, only to see that

confidence fall precipitously as they learn more (associate professors), with confidence levels slowly rising with time (full professors), yet never achieving quite the level seen by the novice.

The complicated multi-year appointment requiring annual reaffirmations can have a negative impact on faculty's understanding of the nature of their contract—and thus their satisfaction with it—until they have been at the institution long enough to have seen how the appointment plays out. As noted earlier, state employees (regardless of tenure status) are required to sign annual contracts, regardless of the length of their appointment. So, an assistant professor with a three-year appointment must re-sign an annual contract in years one, two, and three of their appointment. To be sure, despite the minimal impact on job security—given that this is an almost ubiquitous practice for state employees throughout the United States—this procedure could inhibit a faculty's understanding of their appointment length. The process is further exacerbated after promotion, as associate professors who may have become accustomed to the annual contract renewal are introduced to the biennial appointment renewal that comes with the promotion. Thus, faculty anticipating signing an annual contract counting up to their fifth year as associate professor are understandably confused to see “year one of five” on their third contract, especially because this practice of restarting a five-year contract at year one every other year was not codified in the faculty handbook until after the survey was distributed at NTU.

As faculty spend more time at the institution, especially if they are promoted to the full professor level, they experience both types of appointment renewals: promotion and biennial. This experience, potentially coupled with additional time discussing their appointments with colleagues in various departments, can serve as experiential learning, increasing their confidence about understanding their contract. Those who apply to become full professors are likely to have chosen this institution as their permanent home in academe, especially since there is no consequence from remaining an assistant or associate professor indefinitely. Full professors may have then chosen NTU either because they understand their contract better than junior faculty members or because they are more satisfied with its terms compared who associates who, at mid-career, are perhaps still shopping around for another academic home. Therefore, it is predictable that full professors at NTU will have more confidence, both in terms of contract understanding and their satisfaction with the terms of their employment.

Much as gender plays a role in how secure faculty feel in their jobs at NTU, gender also plays some role in how well faculty feel they understand their appointment contracts. Men at the assistant professor role indicate they have full confidence in their understanding of their contracts (100%), whereas 73% of female assistant professors indicate they understand their contract. That number remains effectively constant for women at the associate professor rank, with 70%; however, 68% of male faculty at NTU at the rank of associate professor indicate contract understanding, nearly one-third lower than responding male assistant professors. It is unclear why men and women understand their contracts differently.

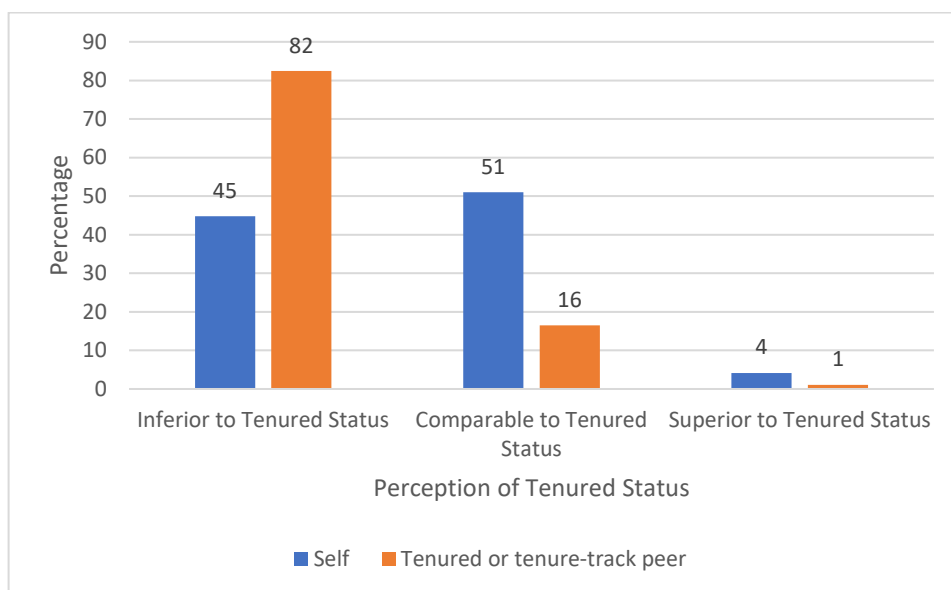
However, overall, this confusion over appointments impacts faculty perception of their job security. One respondent to the survey noted this: “The 5-year contract is really just a 1-year contract. Nobody has ever been able to adequately explain to me how this actually works and why it's worded in such a way.” Similarly, participants in focus groups discussions debated whether they had one employment contract, or multiple, including annual and multi-year agreements. Additionally, the relative youth of the institution combined with its growth phase and the growing need to hire and retain faculty means a dearth of cases where administrators have exercised their power to not renew, let alone terminate, faculty contracts. Therefore, ambivalence or confusion toward this convoluted structure is understandable, and reinforces the idea that when a de-facto lifetime or “thirty-year” contract (i.e., tenure) is not in place, NTT faculty at non-tenure granting institutions such as NTU need clear, transparent communication about their appointments to understand and, therefore, feel secure in their jobs.

The relationship between the NTU faculty's understanding and satisfaction with their contract is important, not only for the analysis of NTU's faculty employment model, but also more generally for the conversations surrounding tenure's decline. NTU's contract model was crafted as a compromise to attract high-quality faculty, while recognizing the lack of political feasibility of adding a tenure-offering institution in this state in the 21st century. However, if faculty's satisfaction with their contract or appointment is only manifested when they understand the terms contained in it, then it will be difficult to attract and retain high-

quality faculty with unclear contract terms. Tenure may vary across institutions, states, and time periods, but it has the advantage of being perceived as a known quantity to faculty—the premier employment model. Any model that attempts to compete with it, therefore, will have a significant marketing obstacle to overcome. The findings of this study indicate that efforts to clarify these terms are important to retain quality faculty. If tenure is not an option—and it increasingly is not—what else can institutions provide faculty to make them feel secure and satisfied with their jobs?

Perceived Negative Stereotypes From Tenure-Line Colleagues

FIGURE 4
SELF PERCEPTION OF NTU JOB VERSUS IMAGINED TENURED COLLEAGUE’S PERCEPTION OF NTU JOB



As we just examined, job security is an essential component in exploring NTU faculty’s job satisfaction, as job satisfaction cannot occur without some form of job security; however, equally important to NTU faculty’s feelings of legitimacy as academics is their self-perception of their own jobs. The survey reveals that while most NTU faculty believe their jobs to be equal or superior to tenure-track jobs, they overwhelmingly believe that their tenure-line peers would consider their jobs inferior. Fifty-five percent of faculty at NTU perceive their NTT status to be “comparable or equivalent” or “superior” to the status of their tenure-line peers, but only 18% indicate that tenure-line peers would agree with that assessment (Figure 3). Eighty-two percent of NTU faculty believe that their tenure-line colleagues would view the NTU job as “inferior” to a tenure-line position—a percentage that is close to double those NTU faculty who actually view their own NTT job as “inferior” to tenure-line positions (Figure 3). Many NTU faculty perceive themselves as having a job that aligns with the traditional expectations of academe (i.e., tenure), as one respondent wrote: “Not having tenure hasn’t impacted me much--I feel like I’m doing basically the same job as I would be doing at a similar institution that has tenure...” However, this self-perception may be clouded by feelings that their peers in tenure-line jobs would de-legitimize them. One respondent wrote, “The only real drawback of not having tenure at [NTU] is the prestige that you lose by others in the field...” The myth of the NTT job as less than ideal persists among many faculty and graduate students, and faculty at NTU believe they have made a choice that their peers would look down on. This finding of NTU faculty’s self-perception versus their colleague’s imagined perception correlates with literature that finds that NTT faculty are negatively stereotyped (Kezar & Maxey, 2012), despite being equivalent or superior as teachers

and scholars. It also adds to the well-established idea that NTT faculty are viewed as “second-class citizens,” even when most faculty are satisfied with their jobs. What is interesting here, though, is that faculty at NTU recognize that even if they are satisfied with their own jobs, they believe that their colleagues would look down on their job.

Do faculty believe tenure would solve the problem, providing legitimacy to both the faculty who do and do not believe that their job is equivalent to the gold standard tenure-line job? Some survey respondents indicate a desire for tenure. One respondent wrote, “I left a tenured position to take a non-tenure track position. Regret it. I think the potential threat of being fired at non-tenure institution creates lack of innovation, creativity and mediocrity.” There were some faculty who indicated they would prefer to have tenure. However, many faculty did not indicate an explicit need or desire for tenure. One faculty member wrote, “I worked in a tenure track position [redacted] before coming here. I take my job here just as seriously, so tenure/non-tenure would not affect my need to help students succeed. I don’t let the tenure/non-tenure status bother me.” Another faculty member noted that they did not feel they had a comparison point, having never had a tenure-line job: “It’s all I’ve ever known, so tenure seems outdated, especially when faculty from other institutions still get let go in economic crises, tenure or not.” Even though some of the respondents have experienced tenure-track employment, it is unlikely that they experienced the same terms of employment, as tenure does not impart uniform conditions.

Figure 3 shows that nearly half—45%—of faculty believe their jobs to be “inferior” to a tenure-line position, although in response to a question regarding the similarity of their job to a tenure-line position, almost 70% state that their job is “very similar” or “somewhat similar” to a tenure-line job. Also, nearly two-thirds of faculty stated that the NTT designation of their job had “little to no impact” on their decision to take it, with another 10% indicating that they were actually more motivated to take the job because of the NTT designation. In other words, most faculty members seem to think that the conditions of their job are in alignment with what they imagine (or recall) a tenure system being.

To faculty at NTU, “tenure” is an abstract term that does not apply to them, and like all abstract terms, is imbued with meaning from the faculty member’s specific and unique experiences in graduate school and/or the work force, and their current position as an untenured employee. The material conditions of their employment may be difficult to separate out from their untenured status. If tenure is de facto job security, then it seems that a job without tenure would lack full job security; however, this and other research have shown that that correlation does not always stand.

CONCLUSION

At every rank, a majority of faculty at the non-tenure-granting college in this case study feel secure in their jobs and satisfied with their contracts, though some feel insecure and unsatisfied with those same contracts. Promotion may have different effects on security and satisfaction, depending on gender and the degree to which the respondents believe they understand their contract. The confusing logistics behind promotion, contract renewal, and reappointment likely have a negative effect on security and satisfaction, especially in such an uncommon model of hiring, where such terms should be explicit. Since NTU faculty’s contract satisfaction is associated with their perceived understanding of its terms, we believe this confusion creates a relative ceiling for job security, one that could be resolved in clear policies and information campaigns by the college and the human resources department.

Many faculty in this case study believe their jobs to be on par with a tenure-line job but believe their peers would look down on their job, or they themselves believe their job to be inferior to a tenure-line job. The satisfaction with their job could stem from the job itself, or it could stem from the cultural narrative of what it means to have a “good” academic job. We believe there should be more emphasis on the actual conditions of the job itself, as opposed to the cultural narrative of tenure. There is no clear definition of what it means to be “without tenure,” or if faculty at non-tenure-granting institutions can even be “without” something that, for them, has never existed. Some believe full-time NTT faculty positions should be replaced by clinical-track positions (Kezar & Sam, 2011), while others note that the force of a strong union seems to help NTT faculty satisfaction (Haviland, 2017). We posit that clear, transparent, and long-term

contracts, combined with standard promotion opportunities, should be part of any position outside tenure. Regardless of the approach to future academic jobs, we argue that shifting away from the continued black-and-white debate over the abstract concept of tenure would allow for more emphasis on the explicit, material conditions of individual faculty jobs, which are increasingly untenured. Such a shift would also allow faculty without tenure to define themselves less by what they are perceived to lack and more by the work they do.

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APPENDIX 1: FACULTY CITIZENSHIP SURVEY

1. What is the highest degree you have earned?
 - Doctorate/Terminal Degree
 - Masters
 - Bachelors
 - Other (please specify) _____
2. How many years have you been working at your institution in a full-time capacity?

3. What is your position?
4. What is your discipline?
5. Is tenure available to any faculty members at your institution?
 - Yes, all faculty are tenure-track
 - Yes, some of the faculty are tenure-track, but some are non-tenure-track
 - No, none of the faculty are tenure-track
 - Unsure
6. What is your faculty status?
 - Non-Tenure Track
 - Tenure-Track, Not tenured
 - Tenure-Track, Tenured
7. Do you have an employment contract?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
8. What kind of contract do you have?
 - Semesterly
 - One-year
 - Three-year
 - Five-year
 - Other (please specify) _____
 - Unsure

9. Please answer the following questions about your employment contract.

- | | |
|--|--|
| How satisfied are you with your contract? | ▼ Very dissatisfied ... Very satisfied |
| How confident are you that you understand the terms of your employment contract? | ▼ Very dissatisfied ... Very satisfied |
| How frequently do you think about your job security? | ▼ Very dissatisfied ... Very satisfied |
| How secure do you feel in your job? | ▼ Very dissatisfied ... Very satisfied |

10. Before taking this survey, how often did you think about your "non-tenure-track" faculty status?

11. In your opinion how similar is your position to a tenured and/or tenure-track faculty position?

12. How did the designation of your job as "non-tenure-track" impact your decision to take your current position, if at all?

13. What does it mean to you to be designated as a "non-tenure track" faculty member?

14. Do you think having the option to pursue tenure would impact the stress/pressure you feel as a faculty member?

- Yes, it would increase my stress
- Yes, it would decrease my stress
- No impact; my stress level would stay the same

15. I have not had to pursue tenure; therefore (check all that apply):

- I have been able to conduct research based on my interests, without feeling undue pressure to publish.
- I have been able to use my skills as I see fit in service to my institution.
- I have been able to focus on pursuing high-quality, innovative teaching.
- I have been able to focus on family and other personal priorities.
- I have published less research than I should have at this point in my career.
- I have done less service to the institution than I should have.
- I have felt less motivation to innovate my teaching.
- I have reserved criticism of the institution/administration when I should have spoken out.
- Other (please specify) _____

16. My colleagues have not had to pursue tenure; therefore... (check all that apply):

- They have been able to conduct research based on their interests, without feeling undue pressure to publish.
- They have been able to use their skills as they see fit in service to the institution.
- They have been able to focus on pursuing high-quality, innovative teaching.
- They have been able to focus on family and other personal priorities.
- They have published less research than they should have at this point in their careers.
- They have done less service to the institution than they should.
- They have felt less motivation to innovate their teaching.
- They have reserved criticism of the institution/administration when they should have spoken out.
- Other (please specify) _____

17. Does the fact that your institution hires non-tenure-track faculty impact your institution's ability to recruit and hire qualified faculty for those positions?
- No, this practice has little or no impact
 - Yes, this practice makes it harder to recruit faculty
 - Yes, this practice makes it easier to recruit faculty
18. How do you perceive your non-tenure-track faculty status in comparison to that of tenured or tenure-track faculty at other institutions?
- I consider my non-tenure-track status to be comparable or equivalent to their tenured or tenure-track status.
 - I consider my non-tenure-track status to be superior to their tenured or tenure-track status.
 - I consider my non-tenure-track status to be inferior to their tenured or tenure-track status.
19. How do tenured or tenure-track faculty that you know at other institutions perceive your non-tenure-track faculty status?
- They consider my non-tenure-track status to be comparable or equivalent to their tenured or tenure-track status.
 - They consider my non-tenure-track status to be superior to their tenured or tenure-track status.
 - They consider my non-tenure-track status to be inferior to their tenured or tenure-track status.
20. When I think about tenure, the following concepts or metaphors come to mind... (check any that apply):
- Marriage yoke
 - Academic freedom
 - Up-or-out
 - Publish or perish
 - Quality control
 - A ticking clock
 - Institutional maturity
 - Prestige
 - Dead wood
 - "In" status
 - Outdated
 - Other (please specify) _____
21. In your opinion, what would be some positive impacts to your institution if tenure track-positions were offered to all full-time faculty? (check all that apply)
- Improve quality of job candidates
 - Improve retention of faculty
 - Improve the ranking or status of the college
 - Improve job security for faculty
 - Allow ineffective faculty to be fired
 - Create needed distinctions between junior/senior faculty
 - Improve quality of faculty mentorship (i.e. tenured faculty mentoring junior faculty)
 - Other (please specify) _____
 - There would be no positive impacts

22. What would be some positive impacts to you if your institution offered tenure track-positions to all full-time faculty? (check all that apply)
- Motivate me to work harder
 - Improve my legitimacy with faculty at other institutions
 - Improve my chances of getting a parallel job at another institution
 - Offer me more job security at this institution
 - Offer me more academic freedom in research
 - Offer me more academic freedom in teaching
 - Allow me to discern which faculty members to emulate and use as research partners
 - Other (please specify) _____
 - There would be no positive impacts
23. In your opinion, what would be some negative impacts to your institution if tenure track-positions were offered to all full-time faculty? (check all that apply)
- Decrease the quality of job candidates
 - Decrease the focus on student success
 - Decrease the focus on innovative teaching, particularly among tenured faculty
 - Decrease focus on quality research, particularly among tenured faculty
 - Create unnecessary distinctions between junior/senior faculty
 - Add stress or pressure to faculty
 - Decrease job security for faculty
 - Other (please specify) _____
 - There would be no negative impacts
24. What would be some negative impacts to you if your institution offered tenure track-positions to all full-time faculty? (check all that apply)
- Decrease my ability to focus on student success
 - Decrease my ability to focus on innovative teaching
 - Force me to spend more time on research than I would like
 - Feelings of insecurity and impostor syndrome prior to achieving tenure
 - Add stress or pressure to meet tenure requirements in 5 years
 - Decrease my job security due to facing termination for failure to meet tenure requirements in 5 years
 - Other (please specify) _____
 - There would be no negative impacts
25. Hypothetically, if given the choice, would you prefer to have a 10% raise or tenure?
- 10% Raise
 - Tenure
 - Neither
26. Finally, do you have any other comments you'd like to add about tenure or non-tenure-track status? Please write them here:
27. What is your gender?
28. What is your age group?
29. What is your ethnicity/race?

APPENDIX 2: GEORGIA GWINNETT COLLEGE ACADEMIC YEAR EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

FACULTY RENEWABLE THREE-YEAR APPOINTMENT

FACULTY RENEWABLE FIVE-YEAR APPOINTMENT

To: «Prefix» «First» «Middle» «Last»

Please be advised that ___(President_____, on behalf of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, has approved your employment as ___(Title)___ at Georgia Gwinnett College. The period of your employment is for the _____academic year beginning on _____and ending on_____. This will comprise the (Contract) year of your three-year appointment. This Contract does not automatically renew.

Your salary for the academic year will be _____ and is payable according to the applicable funding sources and the Institution’s payroll schedule and policies. For fractional portions of a pay period in which service is rendered, payment of salary will be computed as the fraction of the salary for that payroll period in accordance with the Institution’s policies. If your services should be needed beyond your full-time academic year commitment under this Contract, a separate agreement will be made with you covering your services. Notwithstanding any other provision of this contract, for Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the Board of Regents has authorized the President to implement a mandatory furlough program requiring employees to take _____ days of unpaid leave in a number and manner to be determined by the President but not to exceed 13 days. In the event it becomes necessary for the President to exercise this authority, employee furloughs will be implemented in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the Office of the Chancellor.

Your specific job-related duties, responsibilities, and assignments associated with this employment contract are defined elsewhere, are subject to modification as determined to be needed from time to time and are determined by the administrative officers of the institution in your reporting line to the President. All such duties, responsibilities and assignments are incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth herein.

This Contract is made expressly subject to the applicable state and federal laws and to the policies and procedures of the Institution as well as the bylaws, policies, and procedures of the Board of Regents, which can be found on the University System of Georgia website. The Board of Regents reserves the right to change or suspend policies and procedures as necessary.

This Contract is subject to the availability of funds to the Board of Regents and may be terminated in the absence of available funds as determined by the Board of Regents.

Please signify your acceptance of this employment by signing and returning this Contract and all but one of the copies to _____ at this institution within twenty (20) days from this date. Failure to reply within this deadline may void this offer.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

By:(President)_____

Date: _____

CONTRACT ACCEPTANCE

I accept the employment described above under the terms set forth. I understand that at the expiration of the term of this contract I will receive a new and separate contract offer for the _____ academic year unless this is the final year of my three-year appointment and no new and separate offer is made by the President of Georgia Gwinnett College on behalf of the Board of Regents. I further understand that this contract and any renewal thereof are subject to the availability of financial resources as allocated by the State of Georgia and as determined by the Board of Regents.

Signed:_____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Warm-up questions:

- 1) Let's all take a few minutes to get to know each other. We do not have to go around in a circle, but I would like each of you to introduce yourselves. Please share your name and a positive interaction you have had with a colleague recently.

Research questions:

- 2) (*Focus on Aim 1*) How do you feel about the contract structure for faculty at [NTU]?
 - Discussion of tenure-free versus tenure-less environment
- 3) (*Focus on Aim 1*) What does it mean for [NTU] faculty to be non-tenure-track faculty?
- 4) (*Focus on Aim 1*) How do you feel about job security for faculty at [NTU]?
- 5) (*Focus on Aim 2*) Discuss how the availability of promotion influences faculty here at [NTU].
 - *Probe for Internal Motivation*
 - *Probe for External motivation*
 - *Probe for Institutional or faculty*
- 6) (*Focus on Aim 2*) What is the impact of promotion on faculty at [your rank]?
- 7) (*Focus on Aim 2*) What is more important at [NTU]: a faculty member's rank or their years at the institution? Why?
- 8) (*Focus on Aim 3*) Describe some activities or achievements for faculty at [your rank] that build respect for them at [NTU].
- 9) (*Focus on Aim 3*) Do you feel that tenure would add or take away from anything at [NTU]?