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# “Moving Toward One Faculty” at the University of Texas at San Antonio

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From the Delphi Project database of

## Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

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## Example Best Practices in Process to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

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The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) is a large, public, urban-serving research university committed to student success and academic excellence. It is also designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), where over 50% of student populations are Hispanic or Latino/a/x. As student enrollment increases, UTSA’s strategic plan calls for retaining more diverse faculty and improving work environments and experiences of fixed-term-track (FTT) faculty, the new name given to non-tenure-track faculty at UTSA, to better support student learning and engagement.

The campus engaged in a six-year, multi-prong change process. Initially, a faculty task force, composed of both tenure-track and FTT faculty, conducted focus groups and surveys in 2014 and 2015 to better understand FTT faculty’s experiences. Based on the collected data, the fixed-term-track task force wrote a white paper titled “Moving Toward One Faculty at UTSA” in 2015 that made various FTT faculty policy recommendations. In 2018, the task force presented an updated white paper to the provost, who commissioned the task force to revise FTT policies with Academic Affairs based on the recommendations made in the paper. In 2019, a new Non-Tenure-Track Titles and Promotion Working Group was established and completed the revision of FTT policies. In 2020, a committee composed of the representatives of student, staff, faculty and senior leaders voted for the revised policy to be approved.

FTT faculty, which comprises 52% of all UTSA faculty, perceive that the recent changes in FTT faculty policies and practices is a positive step in creating a unified faculty. The improvement in FTT policies and practices have also led UTSA to reevaluate other policies and practices in other areas, such as overall faculty retention, to be more equitable. UTSA is advancing toward realizing its commitment to student success and its role as HSI by better supporting faculty.

## **Example Best Practices**

### **Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Name, Titles, and Ranks**

UTSA has made some important policy changes regarding non-tenure-track faculty based on the suggestions made by Academic Affairs and the NTT Titles and Promotion Working Group composed of both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty. First, Academic Affairs leadership suggested a different name for non-tenure-track faculty because the name “non-tenure track” did not acknowledge the important work those faculty members do. The name has changed to fixed-term-track faculty (FTT) so that it reflects what they are rather than what they are not. Second, part-time and full-time FTT titles were made parallel with the titles of tenure-track faculty. For example, the title of FTT faculty who primarily engage in instruction progresses from Assistant Professor of Instruction to Associate Professor of Instruction, and then to Professor of Instruction. The same applies to FTT faculty of different areas, including professors of research, professors of practice, and clinical professors. The title of lecturer was also changed; now it progresses from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.

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***UTSA revised the policies of FTT faculty recruitment, evaluation and promotion processes to be transparent and systematic and mirror the processes for tenure-track faculty.***

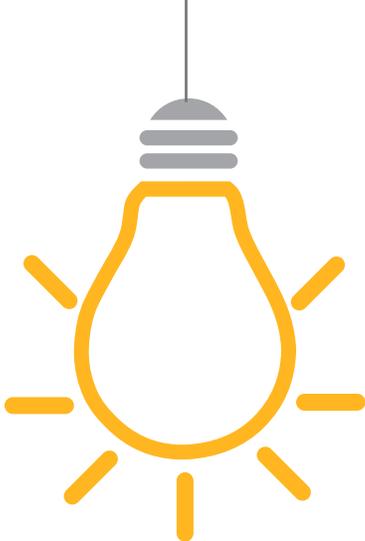
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### **Pay Scale Alterations**

UTSA put in place a new compensation plan for FTT faculty. Based on the recommendations made by the FTT task force and the salary information from the College and University Professional Association, UTSA established the minimum salary pay scale for each rank and title of FTT faculty. The university also plans to increase the minimum pay annually according to increases in the cost of living. The minimum pre-course compensation rate for part-time FTT faculty also increased.

### **Recruitment, Evaluation and Promotion**

UTSA revised the policies of FTT faculty recruitment, evaluation and promotion processes to be transparent and systematic and mirror the processes for tenure-track faculty. Like tenure-track faculty, FTT faculty move through the ranks and receive the same recognition for their promotion. To make the process transparent, the promotion guidelines that delineate FTT evaluation requirements and processes were developed and made accessible online to anyone. Upon approval of the policy update, all FTT faculty received an electronic form that asked whether they wanted to transition to a new title or apply for promotion to get another title. In 2020-21, approximately 10% of FTT faculty went through the new promotion process and reported their experience positively. The policy of FTT recruitment was also updated to ensure a consistent process across the institution, create a diverse committee to review candidates, and intentionally use verbiage that is inclusive and communicates that diversity is valued in recruitment advertisements.



### **Professional Development and Leadership Opportunities**

UTSA provided substantial resources to support continued development of FTT faculty. For example, they are compensated to attend a range of teaching development programs (e.g., The Association of College and University Educators Inclusive Teaching and Equitable Learning Course) offered throughout the year. Through these opportunities, FTT faculty learn and develop new teaching skills and connect with other faculty outside of their departments.

UTSA also encourages and supports FTT faculty to participate in other leadership development opportunities. Academic Affairs at UTSA offers the Next-Gen Faculty Leadership Fellow Program, which promotes inclusive leadership and fosters diverse leaders among faculty. This program provides selected faculty members with an intensive one-on-one training through mentorship to develop leadership skills to become an effective academic leader. Given its purpose of promoting inclusive leadership, faculty from underrepresented backgrounds are encouraged to participate. UTSA also sponsors and covers the cost for faculty who participate in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Leadership Academy, which is a one-year national program to prepare the next generation of diverse leaders who serve as senior-level leaders, specifically in Hispanic-Serving Institutions. FTT faculty who are often marginalized and excluded from those opportunities benefit from such support to interact with their peers, develop leadership and teaching strategies and advance their career.

### **Mentoring**

UTSA offers various mentoring resources and programs, such as a peer mentoring program, training to become a mentor, and resources from the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity for all faculty, including FTT. These resources are offered through the Faculty Mentoring Hub, a central website. These mentoring opportunities support FTT faculty members to develop a sense of community and belonging and learn from their peers. The mentoring programs also help them develop the capacity of teaching, mentoring, and research, present their work in professional conferences, and advance their careers.

### **Example Best Practices in Process**

This section describes UTSA's best practices in the process of creating the above changes.

#### **Shared Governance and Collaboration**

Shared governance and collaboration across various constituencies and groups at UTSA, including FTT faculty, tenure-track faculty, faculty senators, deans and department chairs, senior leaders, staff, student government, Academic Affairs, and Academic Council, led to the significant changes in FTT faculty policies.

The initial task force that conducted data collection and wrote a white paper were composed of both tenure-track faculty and FTT faculty who worked together collaboratively. The new NTT Titles and Promotion Working Group added three department chairs and eight faculty senators to the faculty members of the original task force, while the majority (about 70%) of the working group was FTT faculty. FTT faculty, tenure-track faculty, department chairs, and faculty senators in the working group worked together on revising FTT policy with Academic Affairs and the members of the Academic Council. Finally, the revised policy was approved by a committee composed of the representatives of student,

staff, faculty and senior leaders. This process of collaboration resulted in policy changes in two significant areas: faculty appointments and titles (i.e., NTT to FTT name change, new titles, minimum pay scale) and FTT faculty recruitment, evaluation, and promotion process. The new FTT policy was realized through the shared governance and collaborations across many members of the campus community.

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***The surveys and focus groups show that FTT faculty feel the new titles are welcoming and inclusive and the new promotion process is a positive step in creating a unified faculty.***

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### **Conducting Focus Groups and Administering Surveys**

UTSA started the policy change initiative process by collecting data about FTT faculty and has continued to conduct focus groups and administered surveys to understand the experiences of FTT faculty to better inform policy and practice improvements. The initial data collection raised concerns ranging in four areas:

1. There was no job security and pay was low,
2. Evaluation and promotion procedures were inconsistent (e.g., NTT faculty rubric that focused on research rather than teaching was used to evaluate their work),
3. They were often excluded from faculty meetings and opportunities to vote for issues in their department, and
4. There was a lack of financial support for non-tenure-track faculty to attend professional development opportunities.

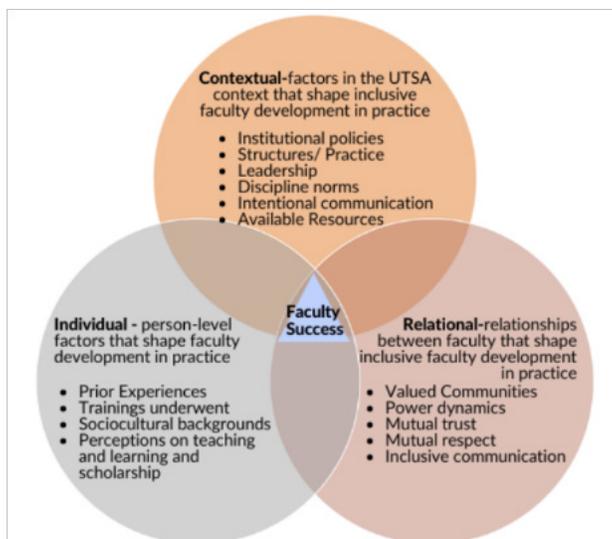
The results of this data collection became the foundation of the white paper submitted to the provost that suggested the FTT policy recommendations, which eventually led to the policy changes. UTSA continues data collection efforts after the policy changes to get feedback from the FTT faculty about how the changes affect them and how they transition to the new promotion process. The surveys and focus groups show that FTT faculty feel the new titles are welcoming and inclusive and the new promotion process is a positive step in creating a unified faculty.

### **Theory-Driven Process: Faculty Success Framework**

The best practices to support FTT faculty at UTSA have been guided by theory. Academic Affairs at UTSA used a faculty success framework that delineates the three-level factors (individual, contextual, and relational) that can lead to faculty success and guide the implementation of the new programs, policies, and processes. They also asked two simple guiding questions when developing and implementing them:

1. Is the program/policy/process is a good thing?
2. Who is it good for?

By using this framework and guiding questions, they ensure that their initiatives have a clear purpose and intention.



### **Benchmark Peer Institutions and a Professional Association**

To write new FTT policies, UTSA benchmarked peer institutions and spent six months examining non-tenure-track faculty policies at the institutions that similarly engaged in the improvement of FTT working environments. UTSA also benchmarked the data from the College and University Professional Association to decide the minimum salary bases in the new FTT policy. Such informed planning and implementation were key in leading successful practices to support FTT faculty at UTSA.

### **Organizational Learning**

The successful efforts to improve FTT policies and practices have contributed to UTSA's organizational learning and have led the university to reevaluate other policies, practices and programs to also be more equitable. For example, Academic Affairs and other academic departments worked collaboratively to reestablish faculty retention policies, including workload, annual evaluation and tenure/promotion. The revised policies have changed to acknowledge the scholarship aligned with the role of HSI and the values of diversity, equity and inclusion.

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Visit The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success for more example practices and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: [pullias.usc.edu/delphi](http://pullias.usc.edu/delphi).

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