

Report of Faculty Voting Rights Committee April 27, 2015

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Although the [UNI Faculty Constitution](#) defines the voting faculty as “all those who are appointed to one of the four academic ranks--instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor--and who hold a probationary or tenured appointment,” some units on campus have allowed those defined as “non-voting faculty” under the Constitution to participate as voting members in their governance. There have also been some instances recently of members of the non-voting faculty either running for election to voting seats or serving as interim voting members of university-level committees. And there remains some confusion about the propriety of those who hold administrative appointments serving as faculty representatives on committees. Coincidentally, in January 2013, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) recommended including faculty members with contingent appointments in faculty governance as full voting members.

Accordingly, the Chair of the Faculty formed this committee to answer the following two questions:

- Does the definition of voting faculty in the Faculty Constitution apply to all instances of faculty governance across all units of the university? If not, what guidelines, if any, are appropriate to define voting faculty at the unit level?
- Are the Constitution’s definitions of voting and non-voting faculty appropriate for UNI today, or should voting rights be extended to faculty members who hold contingent appointments? If the latter, what limits, if any, are appropriate on contingent faculty members’ voting rights?

Findings

Current Practices

- In Fall 2014, when measured as a share of all FTE faculty appointments, non-voting faculty members comprised 24.5 percent of the UNI Faculty. Although the vast majority of these non-voting faculty members teach part-time, every college does employ some full-time adjunct professors and/or term appointees, many of whom have taught at UNI for long periods of time and are fully integrated within their academic units. Many of these people feel deeply connected to UNI, but

their lack of voting rights creates a disconnect and prevents them from feeling a part of the faculty.

- Some academic units on campus allow contingent faculty members full voting rights in faculty governance. Based on discussion within the committee and on a survey sent to department heads (with responses received from 13 of 33 departments), the committee learned of one department that allows term faculty to vote, another that allows P&S Staff members to vote, and another that allows adjunct professors to vote within one of its committees. Further, the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences' [bylaws](#) defines voting faculty as “those College Faculty members who are tenured or tenure track, renewable term, or hold clinical appointments of 50 percent or more with the exception of those Faculty members who hold full time administrative assignments.”

Should participation in governance at all levels of the university be guided by the definition of voting faculty in the Faculty Constitution?

- The committee agreed early on that the university and its faculty are best served by a single definition of voting faculty for all faculty governance. Such a clear definition assures that all authority in governance flows from the Faculty Constitution and promotes cohesion across the disparate units of the university.

Moreover, failure to follow a consistent definition throughout faculty governance could lead to decisions being questioned at a higher level. For example, in the curricular process the University Faculty Senate generally defers to the decisions made by college senates and committees of the UNI Faculty. However, any decisions of those bodies that hinged on the participation of faculty members who are not voting members of the University Faculty could be subject to challenge before the Senate. In short, it becomes difficult for the University Faculty Senate, which acts under the Constitution as the “principal representative agency” of the Faculty, to defer to decisions made by bodies comprised of those who are not voting members of the faculty.

Although Section 1.4 of the Faculty Constitution allows the Senate to grant voting rights for individual faculty members upon petition, this provision has rarely been used and the committee fears that frequent admission of contingent faculty to the voting faculty on an ad hoc basis would cause more confusion than we have right now.

Should voting rights be extended to those currently categorized as non-voting members of the faculty?

- In January 2013, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) published “[The Inclusion in Governance of Faculty Members Holding Contingent Appointments](#).” It recommended that:
 - “[I]ndividuals whose appointments consist primarily of teaching or research activities conducted at a professional level” (p. 7) be granted full voting rights “identical to those for tenure and tenure-track faculty” (p.9).

- These rights may be limited to faculty members who meet certain criteria, e.g., time-in-service requirements.
- “All faculty members, regardless of their status or appointment type, should, in the conduct of governance activities, be explicitly protected by institutional policies from retaliation in the form of discipline, nonreappointment, dismissal, or any other adverse action” (p. 12).
 - Contingent faculty should be compensated for any service obligations that are part of their appointment responsibilities and that, when such responsibilities are an explicit part of the appointment, they should be included as part of the evaluation process.
- The purpose of the AAUP’s recommendations, which this committee endorses, is to enhance academic freedom within the university by broadening participation in faculty governance to all members of the faculty and to ensure that all members of the faculty can participate fully within the shared governance system without fear of retribution or undue pressure from administrators or fellow faculty members.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. *All colleges and academic departments, and all committees at all levels, should follow the definition of voting faculty in the UNI Faculty Constitution. Accordingly, the Chair of the Faculty recently advised the Committee on Committees and the chairs of all college senates that only members of the voting faculty as defined by the UNI Faculty Constitution are eligible to serve as voting members on university committees. The Chair of the Faculty should further engage with individual colleges and departments to discuss the implications of individual colleges and departments departing from the Faculty Constitution’s definition of voting faculty. These discussions should take place as early as possible in the Fall 2015 semester.*
2. *UNI should provide contingent faculty due-process rights and compensation for service work consistent with AAUP recommendations, at which time the UNI Faculty will extend voting rights to such faculty members. This committee supports expanding academic freedom and more closely tying contingent faculty members to the life of the university. Once university policies and procedures are in place to assure that those contingent faculty members assigned service responsibilities are protected and compensated pursuant to AAUP recommendations, the faculty will extend them voting rights consistent with AAUP recommendations. At that time, the Chair of the Faculty should appoint an ad hoc committee of faculty to make recommendations as appropriate to amend the Faculty Constitution.*