

**Division of Natural Sciences**  
**Statement of Principles and Best Practices**  
**Relating to Contingent Faculty**  
**Adopted May 13, 2016**

**Preamble:** Through this document, the Division of Natural Sciences seeks to clarify the rights of contingent faculty within the Division and its Departments and to recommend best practices concerning the treatment of contingent faculty. The recommendations offered herein are consistent with and subject to the governing principles, policies, and regulations of the *Faculty Handbook*,<sup>1</sup> which take precedence in all matters. While some of the items herein concern only the Division of Natural Sciences, a number of recommendations are directed to the PLU Faculty Governance system and the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs.

All faculty have the same goal: to provide the best possible education for PLU students. Contingent faculty are essential to PLU's ability to function and thrive. They teach students across the academic sector, help to maintain our curriculum system, broaden the University's pool of scholarly expertise beyond the borders of current tenure-track line, and enable periods of curricular growth and change. Integrating contingent faculty into the University community in ways that support their academic freedom and professional standing, strengthens our academic program and benefits students, faculty, and the University. Furthermore, the ethical treatment of contingent faculty is mandated by PLU's mission statement.

The contingent faculty in the Division of Natural Sciences, at the time this document is written, are primarily full-time and commonly stay for multiple years, even if they are serving on one-year contracts. Some contingent faculty intend to seek tenure-track positions, while others have no plans to seek tenure. Contingent faculty have taught an average of 27.3% of the annual FTE for the Division of Natural Sciences since academic year 2011-2012. In addition, 31% of the contingent faculty members who have been employed by the Division of Natural Sciences since 2004 have remained at PLU as contingent faculty for at least three years.

## **I. Rights:**

- A. Contingent faculty should be accorded academic freedom and due-process rights, as stipulated in the *Faculty Handbook*.<sup>2</sup>
- B. The Division of Natural Sciences extends voting privileges to contingent faculty during the academic year in which they hold an appointment. Contingent faculty shall not vote on matters of personnel (such as hiring decisions or Dean elections).<sup>3</sup>
- C. Contingent faculty need to be provided with orientation, mentoring, and professional development opportunities.
- D. Contingent faculty deserve clear, transparent, and frank information concerning the likelihood of a tenure-line opening for which they might apply as well as clear feedback concerning how they might make themselves competitive for such positions.
- E. Contingent faculty should be given due consideration along with tenure-line faculty with regard to scheduling, difficulty of teaching loads, office space, etc.
- F. Contingent faculty deserve workloads and responsibilities that are consistent with their level of compensation and job security. They deserve clear, fair, and transparent expectations of service responsibilities, consistent with the *Faculty Handbook*.<sup>4</sup>

## **II. Best Practices for Faculty Culture:**

Departments, Chairs, and the Dean should:

- A. Understand, affirm, and treat contingent faculty as valuable teachers and scholars within the University community.
- B. Give contingent faculty opportunities to participate in Departmental and Divisional meetings, initiatives, and events. Contingent faculty deserve opportunities for service and involvement that allow for professional development and meaningful participation.
- C. Acknowledge the scholarly accomplishments of contingent faculty and invite them to participate in the forums, working groups, and lecture series in which tenure-line faculty present their scholarship and research.
- D. Be sensitive to the particular challenges to academic freedom facing colleagues in contingent positions and vigorously defend the academic freedom and due-process rights of contingent faculty.

### III. Financial Compensation:

- A. Contingent faculty should be accorded fair compensation in line with the established contingent faculty floor models along with adequate consideration of market conditions.
- B. When possible, the Division should advocate for Visiting or Resident positions that are benefits-eligible.<sup>5-7</sup>
- C. Contingent faculty are and should be eligible for professional support and development opportunities, including campus grants and fellowships, support through the Natural Science Summer Undergraduate Research Program, and professional travel allowances.

### IV. Staffing:

- A. When multi-year Visiting positions are appropriate (e.g., until a tenure-track line can be secured, or in cases where a short-term need exceeds two years), the Division should advocate for multi-year appointments that provide stability for both faculty and programs.
- B. Deans and Chairs should carefully analyze Divisional staffing patterns to identify when our hiring practices are using long-term Visiting positions to meet ongoing, structural staffing needs. When ongoing structural needs are identified, Departments and the Dean should advocate strongly to create a tenure-track line or Resident Faculty appointment to fill them.
  - i. Visiting faculty are supposed to be appointed to meet the *temporary needs* of the university. As a general rule, when a contingent faculty member is hired for a third consecutive year in a Visiting appointment, the Division and Department should be advocating with the Administration for a tenure-track search or a Resident Faculty appointment.
  - ii. In cases when requests for a tenure-track search or Resident Faculty appointment are not approved by the Administration, the Department Chair should discuss in a transparent and frank manner with the current contingent faculty member whether continuing to work in a Visiting position at PLU is in his or her best professional interest.
  - iii. The creation of a tenure-track line to fill a structural need previously staffed by a contingent line does not obligate the Department or University to hire the Visiting Faculty member who had been filling that need. Departments have the right and responsibility to seek and hire the most qualified candidates for tenure-track

positions. However, the service and performance of a multi-year Visitor should be given due weight in a Departmental search process.

**V. Hiring:**

- A. Departments should, within budgetary constraints, conduct rigorous searches for Visiting faculty that will help ensure that Visiting faculty have the qualifications to provide the best possible education for PLU students.
- B. Upon the hire of a contingent faculty member, the Department Chair should meet with that faculty member to discuss job responsibilities and expectations, the terms and length of employment, processes of evaluation and review, and prospects for more permanent employment.

**VI. Evaluation and Peer Review:**

- A. Department Chairs are responsible for completing the annual, 3-year, and 5-year reviews for contingent faculty stipulated by the *Faculty Handbook*.<sup>8</sup>
- B. Annual reviews for multi-year Visiting positions should include substantive feedback on teaching, scholarship and other areas of professional development that would make a contingent faculty member a strong candidate for an eventual tenure-track position.
- C. During the third-year review for a Visiting faculty member, the question of the creation of a more permanent line should be explicitly addressed by the Department Chair.

**VII. Recommendations:**

- A. In order to guarantee effective orientation and communication at the time of hire, the Division should generate a list of rights and responsibilities for all contingent faculty. This list should be distributed to the contingent faculty member when they meet with the Department Chair upon hire.
- B. Contingent faculty should be afforded promotion in rank and multi-year appointments.
  - i. The *Faculty Handbook* does not currently have a process for promotion in rank for contingent faculty. The Division recommends that Faculty Governance system either create a clear promotion process for contingent faculty or clearly state that contingent faculty cannot be promoted.

- C. The Division recommends that the Faculty Governance system clarify the annual, 3-year, and 5-year review processes for contingent faculty in the *Faculty Handbook*.<sup>8</sup> The review processes should be consistent with the rights and responsibilities of contingent faculty.
- D. The Division recommends that the Faculty Governance system clarify the term “full-time”<sup>6</sup> as it applies to service expectations and to voting rights in Faculty Assembly. The Faculty Handbook currently defines “full-time” at 1.00 FTE, but a number of our lab sections have 0.5 or 0.75 course teaching loads that limit contingent faculty to 5.75 courses (0.96 FTE) within an academic year. We request clarity regarding significant figures and whether there is a more appropriate lower limit for the “full-time” designation.
- E. Through this process we have encountered a degree of confusion amongst the faculty regarding distinctions between “full-time” vs. “part-time” and “Resident Faculty” vs. “Visiting Faculty”. The Division recommends that the Faculty Governance system further clarify these designations and/or provide education to the faculty as to the meaning of these terms.

#### **Notes and References:**

1. The writers of this statement referenced the current version of the Faculty Handbook: the Eighth Edition September 2014 - updated April 2016.
2. Protection of the academic freedom and policies regarding due process of faculty (including contingent faculty) can be found in:
  - Section I: Faculty Constitution and By-Laws, Article III: Rights and Duties
  - Section I: Faculty Constitution and By-Laws, Article VI: Grievance, Disciplinary, and Dismissal Procedures
  - Section IV: Personnel Policies and Employee Benefits, Part IV: Faculty Personnel Policy, Section 1
  - Section V: Special Institutional Policies and Procedures, Part V: Policy for Dealing with and Reporting Possible Misconduct in Science
3. Policies concerning the voting eligibility of contingent faculty for Faculty Assembly and within divisions and departments can be found in:

- Section I: Faculty Constitution and ByLaws, Article IV: Governance, Section1: The Faculty Assembly
  - Section II: Aspects of Faculty Organization, Part I: Definition of Faculty, Section 1: Faculty Membership, B: Contingent Faculty
  - Section II: Aspects of Faculty Organization, Part VI: Voting Eligibility
4. Policies concerning service expectations for contingent faculty can be found in:
    - Section II: Aspects of Faculty Organization, Part I: Definition of Faculty, Section 1: Faculty Membership, B: Contingent Faculty
  5. Some terminology such as benefits eligible is not defined or governed by the *Faculty Handbook*, instead these terms can be found in the *Personnel Manual* available on the PLU Human Resources website.
  6. The terms “full-time” and “part-time” are defined in:
    - Section II: Aspects of Faculty Organization, Part I: Definition of Faculty, Section 1: Faculty Membership
    - PLU Personnel Manual
  7. The definitions of rank (e.g., instructor, assistant professor, etc.) and the definitions of classifications for non-tenure-eligible contingent faculty lines (e.g., visiting faculty, resident faculty, etc.) can be found in:
    - Section II: Aspects of Faculty Organization, Part I: Definition of Faculty, Section 2: Faculty Ranks and Classifications
  8. Policies concerning the review of continent faculty can be found in:
    - Section II: Aspects of Faculty Organization, Part I: Definition of Faculty, Section1: Faculty Membership, B: Contingent Faculty
    - Section IV: Personnel Policies and Employee Benefits, Part IV: Faculty Personnel Policy, Section 3: Faculty Review Process for Contingent Faculty