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Institutionalizing a Culture of Respect for Teaching and Professional Faculty at the University of Denver

2021 Winner of the Delphi Award

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From the Delphi Project database of

Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

- ✓ Renewable Contracts with Pathways to Promotion and Full Professionalization
- ✓ Inclusion in Governance
- ✓ Development of a Position to Support Teaching and Professional Faculty (TPF)
- ✓ Professional Development
- ✓ Onboarding and Mentoring

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

- ✓ Organizational Learning
- ✓ Involvement of Board, Administration and Faculty in Planning and Supporting Changes
- ✓ Foregrounding Equity and Respect as Principles

In 2015, the Board of Trustees at the University of Denver approved a new Advancement, Promotion and Tenure document developed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the Board of Trustees. This document created a new line of full time non-tenure-track full-time faculty, which DU refers to as Teaching and Professional Faculty (TPF). The lines included Clinical Faculty, Teaching Faculty, Research Faculty, Professors of Practice, Library, Visiting and Adjunct. This change transformed the lives of over 200 full-time lecturers, giving them full-time status with renewable contracts and pathways to promotion, a defined role in university governance and a pathway to professional advancement and formal promotion. Keeping in mind their institutional commitment to inclusion, respect and collegiality, DU began thinking critically about implementation and institutionalization in an effort to keep teaching and professional faculty afloat. DU's implementation and institutionalization efforts were guided by an equity-minded approach, revisiting many of their policies, procedures and initiatives and asking "what does this mean for teaching and professional faculty?" In answering this key question, DU began to introduce a slew of changes toward institutionalizing a culture of respect for TPF.

Renewable Contracts with Pathways to Promotion and Full Professionalization

One of the changes introduced is that TPF can now be hired on renewable contracts for up to five years. After five years,

non-tenure-track faculty can be promoted to the new line of non-tenure-track full time faculty with the title assistant teaching professor, assistant clinical professor or assistant professor of the practice. Full professors in these lines have seven year contracts. The evaluation criteria for appointment, annual review, reappointment and promotion is based on either excellence in teaching (teaching professor) or teaching, participation in shared governance and service (clinical professor and professor of the practice). This change gives TPF full professionalization at the institution with new titles, stability and opportunities to engage in shared governance.

Inclusion in Shared Governance

To make more strides toward a culture of respect for TPF at DU, TPF were now able to have more participation and representation in the governance structure. In fact, the president of the faculty senate was an off-the-tenure-track faculty member in academic years 2008-2010, 2010-2012 and 2014-2016. Furthermore, TPF serve in leadership roles within DU's faculty senate with 37 TPF on the faculty senate and five on the faculty senate's executive committee as of 2021.

As a result of sweeping changes that influence governance, academic units also began giving TPF more say in departmental governance. For example, the Graduate School of Social Work reevaluated their hiring and review processes to ensure that TPF play a more active role in selecting and evaluating both their tenure-track and non-tenure track colleagues.

Development of a Position to Support Teaching and Professional Faculty

Furthermore, DU made an effort to inform the campus community of the realities of TPF. The University appointed a clinical professor as its inaugural Resident-Scholar for Teaching and Professional Faculty. The resident-scholar role is responsible for supporting faculty and educating the DU community about the role of faculty off the tenure track by sharing best practices

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and relevant research. DU also made it a point to publicly share data related to teaching and professional faculty, as well as a timeline of events and a number of other resources. This [publicly available website](#) is housed under the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and is available for campus community members to learn more about TPF.

Professional Development

DU offers TPF stipends to participate in professional development opportunities. Teaching and professional faculty, along with contingent part-time faculty members, were also eligible to receive different types of support ranging from instructional design support to funds for materials, equipment and software as a part of a 2020 \$2.2 million commitment to supporting teaching enhancements. Access to this money gave TPF the opportunity to grow as instructors and improve classroom learning for all students.

As part of a broader Symposium Project, the University also created a working group of teaching and professional faculty called Mentoring and Onboarding Across Rank and Series, where they surveyed best practices and [created a vision for rethinking onboarding and mentoring along a lifecycle](#). Furthermore, the faculty senate initiated a Teaching Excellence



Task Force, with half of the committee comprised of teaching and professional faculty. These committees and working groups give TPF the opportunity to assume leadership roles and influence change on campus.

To ensure that continued support of this group was an institutional priority, DU hosted a number of conferences, summits and workshops. Two specific professional development opportunities, the Summit of Shared Governance and the Provost's Panel on Supporting Teaching and Professional Faculty, were well attended and served as key spaces for organizational learning.

Onboarding and Mentoring

As a result of the new contracts and pathways instituted by DU, teaching and professional faculty are now included in the general onboarding process for new faculty. During this process, they receive invitations to orientations and workshops as well as a series of coordinated letters from campus leaders introducing them to resources.

The resident scholar position also plays a pivotal role in fostering an onboarding experience that recognizes teaching and professional faculty's particular needs. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, the resident scholar, along with the faculty fellow for teaching and learning, facilitated a faculty learning community dedicated to building community. The learning community was well attended by more than 40 teaching and professional faculty members. DU

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also created and offers yearly panels of full and associate TPF on "pathways to promotion" to help guide new members of the series and build community across academic units.

For adjunct faculty in particular, DU made it a priority to create a number of resources to acclimate new faculty and instill a culture of respect. The Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs' office sends out an adjunct faculty newsletter on a quarterly basis to highlight opportunities for, and contributions of, contingent faculty at DU. Also, in Fall 2021, DU began hosting a mini-orientation for adjunct faculty which is also run on a quarterly basis. The orientation is held in both asynchronous and synchronous formats to honor the wide range of experiences that permeate the lives of adjunct faculty.

Organizational Learning

In order to institutionalize a culture of respect, members of the DU campus community would first need to understand the contemporary realities of TPF across the institution, and specifically, the areas of faculty work necessary for a respectful culture. Much of this work is rooted in Laura Sponsler's 2020 White Paper, **Institutionalizing a Culture of Respect for Teaching and Professional Faculty**, Dr. Sponsler created the white paper after conducting a study of both artifacts (policies) and experiences (interviews.) In this white paper, she created a scorecard that DU will use help understand

the institution's strengths and areas for growth and improvement in supporting TPF. This same scorecard could also be used for accountability purposes related to implementation of changes policies and practices. The scorecard includes key elements such as employment equity, academic freedom and autonomy, flexibility, professional growth and collegiality.

These key elements are simplified to even finer elements such as,

- Clear role definitions (employment equity),
- Involvement in university governance (academic freedom and autonomy), and
- Promotion and evaluation (professional growth)

To garner a better understanding of whether or not change efforts were being institutionalized, DU coded each element either:

- Green (consistent institutionalization across the university),
- Yellow (inconsistent institutionalization across the university), or
- Red (not institutionalized at the university)

This allowed them to take the pulse of the community and create new supports, resources and opportunities as necessary.

Involvement of Board, Administration and Faculty in Planning and Supporting Changes

To enact sweeping and systemic changes for TPF, DU included their Board of Trustees, administration and both tenure-track and TPF faculty in planning and supporting their outlined changes. The inclusion of all stakeholders in the planning and implementation process was integral to institutionalizing efforts to change and support TPF work. Together, they worked under a shared vision and mission to better value the contributions of TPF, seeing them as important members of the campus community and helping to actualize university-wide missions, goals and priorities around student learning and success.

Foregrounding Equity and Respect as Principles

DU foregrounded equity and respect as guiding principles to best inform all of their efforts to improve TPF life. These principles served as guidelines in their ideating and implementation processes, in many respects, forcing them to re-evaluate policies and practices that were responsible for TPF inequities, and identify areas for improvement and change. Furthermore, DU also turned to scholars who conduct equity and faculty workforce-related research to best identify solutions and best practices.

Learn more about University of Denver's efforts to support all faculty through the **Institutionalizing a Culture of Respect for Teaching and Professional Faculty** program at: <https://duvpfa.du.edu/teaching-and-professional-faculty/>

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.

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