

Statement of Best Practices for Better Integrating Part-Time Lecturers into the
Academic Community at Rutgers University-Camden
Camden Faculty Council 1/9/23

Introduction

Part-Time Lecturers (PTL's) are among the most important and valuable members of the academic community at Rutgers University-Camden as well as throughout Rutgers and in many colleges and universities nationwide. They teach and mentor our students with skill and dedication, and they involve themselves with energy and passion in the life of the institution.

A large number of PTL's teach at Rutgers University-Camden. As a practical matter, given the large proportion of courses taught by PTL's, the university could not fulfill its mission without the deep and abiding commitment of PTL's to their students and to the community.

Nevertheless, it is well-known that PTL's are in many ways not accorded the dignity and recognition that they deserve. Their compensation is not proportionate to the vital service they perform and the skills and credentials that they bring to their jobs. They have little or no job security and little or no opportunity for formal advancement within their ranks. They are often marginalized within the academic community in large and small ways. This situation hurts PTL's, but it even more profoundly degrades the university.

The role of PTL's and the material recognition and other forms of respect that they deserve raise significant structural issues that challenge both Rutgers and universities nationwide. Academic institutions across the country are grappling with these challenges or ignoring them at their peril. At Rutgers, continuing efforts are being made to address these issues, both in the context of university negotiations with the union representing PTL's and in the active deliberations of the University Senate. At its meeting on April 29, 2016, the Senate approved an important report and set of recommendations on "Greater Integration of Contingent Faculty in the Rutgers Community." That document is available at

<http://senate.rutgers.edu/FPAConS1409GreaterIntegrationOfContingentFacultyApril2016.pdf>

The goal of this document is much more modest. It suggests a set of best practices that can be implemented now by academic units and departments at Rutgers University-Camden even while larger and more difficult questions are being considered throughout the university. Many of these practices are already in place in some units and departments. They should become the norm throughout the campus. While the Faculty Council has encouraged these best practices in the past, we believe that it is essential to remind our colleagues at Rutgers Camden of the importance of PTL's to our mission.

These best practices can help accord PTL's the dignity they deserve. But they are also vital to the institution's own self-interest. Recruiting and retaining the best possible PTL's and giving them the opportunity to contribute to their community to their full potential, are indispensable to the larger goals, set out in the strategic plans for Rutgers and Rutgers University-Camden, to nurture and sustain a world-class faculty and maintain a rich and rewarding learning environment for our students. In addition, listening to the views and insights of PTL's on the many questions confronting departments, academic units, and the entire campus can only enrich our collective deliberations and the wisdom and practicality of our collective decisions.

We recognize, of course, that the role and aspirations of PTL's vary. Some are engaged full-time in professional pursuits outside the university. Some are working at several universities at the same time. Some would not wish to be further involved in activities and responsibilities beyond

the courses that they teach, particularly without additional compensation. To that extent, the practices that we set out in sections 9 to 14 and 16 to 17 of this list of best practices need to be understood as entirely voluntary and not as additional burdens on PTL's. But many PTL's would welcome the opportunity to enter more fully into the life of the academic community beyond the classroom, and the community itself would be better if their distinctive voices were heard in faculty deliberations and if their enormous energy could be tapped more successfully.

Best Practices

Academic units and departments should, as far as possible, endeavor to:

Goal: Stability and Security

1. Hire PTL's well in advance, to allow them to plan their lives and prepare their courses.
2. Assign courses to PTL's year-by-year or on an even longer schedule rather than merely semester-by-semester.

Goal: Integration and Inclusion

3. Assure an adequate and complete orientation process for PTL's, particularly if newly-hired, including guidance on classroom and course technology as well as library procedures, and give PTL's enough time to obtain library privileges, e-mail accounts, and otherwise become completely engaged in the institutional structure of the university.
4. Provide PTL's with adequate office space, including access to computers. Similarly, provide home computers to PTL's as necessary and appropriate.
5. Be sure to include PTL's in all continuing communications regarding rules and procedures relevant to their teaching and other tasks.
6. Make particular efforts to reach out to PTL's who primarily teach off-campus, and include them as practical in all the initiatives discussed in this Statement.

Goal: Public Recognition

7. Include PTL biographies on unit and departmental websites.
8. Generally treat PTL's as eligible to receive departmental awards and honors for faculty teaching, service, and scholarship, and also create awards and honors specifically for PTL's.

Goal: Faculty Life and Deliberations

9. Invite PTL's to march in graduation and convocation ceremonies and attend other ceremonial events on campus.
10. Invite PTL's to attend and participate in departmental and academic unit faculty meetings (other than those held in executive session), particularly meetings concerning course planning, requirements of the major, pedagogy, long-term planning, and other questions regarding which PTL's experience and expertise would be particularly valuable.
11. Similarly, invite PTL's to attend and participate in other formal and informal faculty deliberations, including faculty retreats, and include PTL's in e-mail and other ongoing faculty-wide discussions relevant to their interests, expertise, and experience.
12. Invite PTL's to join and participate in appropriate committees, boards, advisory groups, and the like, and invite them to help plan conferences and other events relevant to their interests and expertise.

13. In addition to the above, also create specific regular opportunities for PTL's within and across units and departments to meet with each other in formal and informal settings to learn from each other's experiences, share pedagogical insights, and share views on matters of common concern.

14. Invite PTL's to academic unit and departmental faculty and faculty/student social events, including beginning-of-year, end-of-year, holiday, birthday, and other receptions, gatherings, and parties.

15. Design class visitation and similar interactions to facilitate constructive support, and the nurturing of ongoing relationships between tenure-track faculty and PTL's, rather than merely evaluation.

Goal: Involvement with Students

16. Adequately recognize and facilitate the important role that PTL's often play outside the classroom, including informal advising of students, writing letters of recommendation, and the like.

17. Authorize PTL's to supervise independent study projects in which their experience and expertise would be particularly valuable, and compensate them for such work in accordance with the current collective bargaining agreement.

Goal: Compensation

18. Recognizing that the larger questions regarding the economic model on which the modern public university is built can only be addressed at a higher level, but also understanding that the current collective bargaining agreement establishes only minimum requirements for PTL compensation, determine to pay PTL's a salary that reflects their expertise, experience, academic credentials, accomplishments, and length of service to the university.