

## Top Ten Myths & Misconceptions about Non-Tenure-Track Faculty at UGA

- 1. “We don’t have any non-tenure-track faculty in my school/college.”**  
*Actually, although certain faculty tracks such as public service faculty, research scientists, librarians, and physicians tend to be in units that report through the vice presidents, all 17 of UGA’s schools and colleges do have full-time, non-tenure-track faculty. Overall, UGA’s non-tenure-track faculty comprise **over 42%** of our university’s full-time faculty, and in some departments and units, they are the majority.*
- 2. “Doesn’t ‘non-tenure-track’ mean the same as limited-term, part-time, or adjunct?”**  
*Actually, almost all of UGA’s non-tenure-track faculty are **full-time** (there are over 1,300 full-time, vs. about 250 part-time, non-tenure-track faculty at UGA). “Limited-term” is a type of employment status (full-time employees with a limit on the number of years they can be employed). Non-tenure-track faculty are usually in the “regular” employment category, as are their tenure-track colleagues. At UGA, “adjunct” applies to unpaid affiliate faculty positions for individuals who are not employed by UGA, and can be used with any faculty rank (including professors).*
- 3. “Aren’t non-tenure-track faculty more like staff or post-docs?”**  
*Actually, most non-tenure-track faculty ranks require terminal degrees for appointment and promotion, and their roles comprise a career pathway. Faculty in these roles often have particular real-world experience, certification, and/or expertise, adding substantive value to the university, their units, and their faculty activities. As a whole, though their percent allocation of effort may be different, UGA’s non-tenure-track faculty perform the same faculty activities (e.g., teaching, research, publishing, mentoring, grant-writing, supervising internships, administrative leadership, etc.) as tenure-track colleagues, and are indeed faculty members.*
- 4. “Non-tenure-track faculty mostly just teach, right?”**  
*It depends on their career track. Actually, there are **nine** different faculty career tracks, taking part in all aspects of UGA’s mission. They are academic rank (which includes instructors as well as the tenure-track/tenured faculty); academic professionals; administrative A; clinical faculty; lecturers; librarians; public service faculty; physicians; and research scientists. Lecturers, clinical faculty, academic professionals and instructors are all part of UGA’s “teaching faculty” (though others may also teach); research, public service and outreach, and administration are also key activities for many non-tenure-track faculty.*
- 5. “No one would pick a non-tenure-track career so these folks must be people who just couldn’t get a tenure-track job, right?”**  
*Actually, of the >300 respondents in a 2017 campus-wide survey of non-tenure-track faculty, over 82% agreed that they took their position because they “wanted to focus their career on doing the things this position entailed.” Fewer than 15% indicated a reason was that they “could not get a tenure-track job,” and more than half agreed that they “specifically chose this career path over a tenure-track one.”*
- 6. “Non-tenure-track faculty are just here temporarily.”**  
*Actually, the non-tenure-track respondents in our 2017 survey reported an average length of time at UGA of almost 11 years, with over 7 years in their current career track. Only 22%*

rated it unlikely or very unlikely that they would still be in this role 5 years later, and the most common reason cited for likely departure was retirement.

7. **“Don’t non-tenure-track faculty in my department have to leave the room whenever we talk about tenure-track hires or policies?”**

Actually, while only academic-rank (tenure-track) faculty at or above certain levels may vote on the appointment, promotion, and tenure of other academic-rank faculty, including **all** faculty members in departmental meetings, candidate visits, curriculum discussions, and other unit-level affairs is entirely possible and supportive of an inclusive culture.

8. **“Non-tenure-track faculty should not be involved in faculty governance since they don’t have independence from the administration and don’t understand the long-term interests of the university.”**

Actually, it’s a nationally recognized best practice to include non-tenure-track faculty in faculty governance at all levels. Many non-tenure-track faculty are in fact spending their entire career at UGA, and many are already involved in governance at the school/college and University Council level. Only 24% of the non-tenure-track faculty respondents from our 2017 survey agreed that they currently have appropriate representation on their school/college faculty senate or equivalent. 60% of respondents felt that UGA needs more representation of non-tenure-track faculty on the University Council and school/college governance bodies. In 2019, University Council approved dedicated slots for non-tenure-track faculty representation in the Faculty Affairs Committee.

9. **“Non-tenure-track faculty already have all the same other rights and privileges as tenure-track faculty, just not tenure.”**

As full-time professionals, non-tenure-track faculty should indeed be provided with appropriate financial support and resources to carry out their job responsibilities as well as activities that relate to their specific promotion requirements (e.g., funding for conference travel to allow for national-level impact and reputation). However, from our 2017 survey, only 16% agreed that they have the “same overall opportunities and privileges as tenure-track faculty” in their unit/department. Most non-tenure-track roles are currently excluded from teaching First-Year Odyssey Seminars, from some faculty governance committees, and from many awards and fellowship programs. In fact, only 26% agreed that there are appropriate awards and recognitions available to them in their non-tenure-track role.

10. **“I respect and appreciate my non-tenure-track colleagues; surely they don’t have any complaints or concerns about their treatment in our department.”**

Thanks for working to support all of your faculty colleagues. National research has shown the importance of departmental culture and the key role of the department chair on non-tenure-track faculty performance (Kezar, 2013). However, from our 2017 survey of UGA’s non-tenure-track faculty, fewer than 20% agreed that their departmental peers in tenure-track roles “understand broader concerns and issues relating to non-tenure-track faculty,” and only 21% agreed that they “feel equally as appreciated at UGA as tenure-track faculty members are.” Additionally, only 44% agreed that their “current supervisor/unit head has a clear understanding of issues relating to non-tenure-track faculty.” Thanks for being an informed advocate and a supportive colleague!