

Policy Question:

What are Research Professors (of any rank)?

Why research faculty? In essence, research faculty enable a university to expand their capabilities and successes in research and graduate education with a different cost model and commitment level than that of “regular” tenure-track faculty. In that sense, they are the research analogue to the teaching version of this, which are often called “instructors” or “lecturers”. In the case of research faculty, key questions arise about should there be some kind of “tenure” for these faculty and, if so, what does tenure mean? Similarly, questions about the processes for hiring them, appointments within academic departments, duties and rights within departments, workload and expectations, all need to be answered.

Questions that AA requests the Faculty Senate’s Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee address:

- 0) Should we have Research Professors (any rank) and, if so, how should such positions be defined and distinguished from “regular” tenure-track professors? AA and R&ED support the concept of Research Professors, contingent on the resolution of the questions/issues discussed below. Some suggestions to distinguish research professors from regular professors are:
 - (i) Research professors, unlike "regular" professors, typically have a different tenure model and are not usually eligible for permanent tenure but, instead, are eligible for a sort of short-term tenure that provides short term (duration to be determined) academic-year support if and when their external funding "dries up". However, there are a wide variety of tenure models across the U.S. What should tenure mean, if it exists at all, for research faculty? Things like duration of the funding, do they have to pay it back, and other logistical details will require discussion. Note that this implies that the majority or totality of funding of research faculty's salaries is external funds. Also note that rank, and an appropriate promotion and tenure policy, must be defined for research professors.
 - (ii) Research professor's duties and rights within a department should be defined. Should it be determined by the department, with some constraints? Some of prospective constraints include that research faculty cannot be expected to carry a major teaching load, nor a major service load for the department. Similarly, departmental voting rights of research faculty might be different from regular faculty, depending on the issue at hand (unless the department chooses otherwise).

- (iii) Research faculty workloads and related expectations is typically quite different from regular faculty. How well-defined should these parameters be? A research faculty's primary work-load assignment is research, for example, and not teaching. In contrast, for regular faculty, teaching is nearly always a major portion of their work-load assignment (teaching buyouts for faculty who attract abundant external funds can, in principle, be the exception to this).
 - (iv) Should research professors be required to teach to some degree, such as graduate student advising or teaching formal graduate student classes? I suggest that those with the title of research professors ought to profess, which requires teaching. Limiting their "professing" role to graduate teaching and advising would distinguish them from regular professors.
- 1) How should research professors be appointed to a department? Should it be required that all with the title of research professor have an appointment in an academic department? In my view, all persons with the title of "professor" of any rank (research or "regular") should have a position within an academic department within AA and should be admitted to that academic unit by a faculty vote and/or a standard national search process. As such, the Chair of the department should be a supervisor of record and have an annual-review role. The VP of Research and Economic Development should also play a major role in the annual review process. Presumably the Chair should sign any related PAFs and the professor should submit an annual PAR to the chair as is the case for other professors.
 - 2) Should all research faculty, like "regular" faculty, be provided an office by their home departments and a research lab, if needed? I think "yes".
 - 3) What should the tenure and promotion process be? I suggest using the existing NMT Tenure and Promotion Policy as a starting point, appropriately modified to reflect the answers to the questions and issues listed above.