

Summary of Issues Regarding Evaluation and Mentoring of SPH Contract Faculty

Submitted by SPH Faculty Consultative Committee
October 1, 2010

Overview/ Rationale for this Study: SPH FCC members have indicated that some contract faculty members in the SPH were being encouraged, or even pressured, into taking on roles that were not in the language of their original contract, and that evaluation of contract faculty for continuation and for promotion was not based on the wording of their contracts

Study Approach:

(1) Over several FCC meetings in Fall 2009, FCC members discussed potential work environment/equity issues that might be of importance to contract faculty in the SPH. The following queries about contract faculty were drafted, then given to Heads of each Division for consideration. FCC representatives interacted with their Division Head to understand and summarize the policies and practices in their Division, and also discussed the queries with one or two contract faculty in their own Division.

Question 1: What are the procedures in your Division regarding annual review for contract faculty? Who participates in the review? Against what standards is the faculty member assessed? How do those standards relate to the language of the contract?

Question 2: What are the procedures in your Division regarding mentoring and career planning (e.g., promotion) for contract faculty? Who participates in the mentoring? Against what standards is the faculty member assessed for promotion? How do those standards relate to the language of the contract?

Question 3: In what Division-specific votes is the contract faculty member allowed to participate? (e.g., recommendations to the Division Head on new faculty hires, changes in curriculum or curriculum-related Division policies, changes in research-related policies, changes in merit review procedures or effort allocation goals, major graduate program changes or start-up of a new graduate program)

Question 4: May a contract faculty member serve on the search committee for a contract faculty position? May a contract faculty member serve on the search committee for a tenure-track/tenured faculty position?

Question 5: When a contract comes to the end of its term and is renewed, a new contract should be written and signed by the faculty member and the Division Head. (The language may or may not be exactly the same as the original contract. This would allow the expectations placed on that faculty member to change across time.) Is this happening in your Division, or is the contract appointment being renewed *without* the language of the contract being revisited by the faculty member and/or Division Head?

(2) SPH FCC members also collected basic data on contract faculty in the SPH (the number of contract faculty by Division and rank in the SPH), and

(3) Reviewed the SPH 7.12 document's language on hiring, continuation, and promotion of contract faculty.

Findings:**(1) Summary of Queries:**

Question 1: While Divisions vary in their review procedures, all Division Heads reported that the annual merit review process is largely the same for contract faculty as it is for tenure-track/tenured faculty and that contract faculty are evaluated relative to the language in their contract. Biostatistics has an official ‘work expectations’ document which is now being modified to be more explicitly inclusive of contract faculty and how their expectations might differ from tenure-track/tenured expectations.

There are differences across Divisions. While all EpiCH review and vote on continuation of contract faculty, similar to the review and continuation of Assistant and Associate tenure track faculty, other divisions reviews are by the Division Head or the Division Head and a small subset of the Division’s faculty.

Question 2: Individual senior faculty mentors, or mentoring teams of 2-3 senior faculty, are assigned to each Assistant Professor in Biostatistics, EpiCH, and EHS; there are no contract Assistant Professors in HPM. In no Division does an Associate Professor (contract or tenure-track/tenured) get an ‘assigned’ mentoring team to guide them for promotion to Full. Contract faculty are assessed for promotion according to the language in the SPH 7.12 document.

Question 3: In all Divisions, contract faculty are encouraged to participate fully in faculty meetings and vote on all matters not explicitly restricted to vote by tenure-line or tenured faculty in the SPH 7.12 document.

Question 4: In general across Divisions, contract faculty can participate on faculty search committees of all types. In Divisions with relatively few contract faculty members, contract faculty have not served on search committees for tenure-track/tenured positions, but there is no policy excluding them from doing so.

Question 5: Continuation review in EpiCH is done for both tenure-track and contract faculty, at which time contract language is available to the reviewing faculty. This is not true in Biostatistics or HPM, where year-to-year renewal of contracts is in the control of the Division Head. There are no contract faculty in EHS.

(2) The number of contract faculty in the SPH are:

- Biostatistics (4 Assistant, 1 Associate, 0 Full, with plans to hire several more Assistants over the next two years);
- EHS (0 Assistant, 1 Associate, 0 Full);
- EpiCH (2 Instructors, 3 Assistant, 4 Associate, 0 Full);
- HPM (0 Assistant, 3 Associate, 0 Full).

(3) For appointment and promotion of contract faculty, the current language in the SPH 7.12 document (September 2005 version; no updated version has yet been approved), starting on p.20, is:**II. Contract Faculty Positions****C. Promotion**

1. Standards Promotion of contract faculty (K or J) is made under Section 3.4 of the University of Minnesota regulations regarding *Faculty Tenure*. Information on the candidate’s performance expectations, contained in the candidate’s contract, must accompany the documentation for promotion. The primary difference between the standards for regular and contract faculty is that contract faculty must

have demonstrated their ability to satisfy the performance criteria at some point in their career, and with sustained performance in all areas included in the candidate's contract, whereas promotion of regular faculty requires evidence of sustained performance in all areas.

Conclusions: SPH FCC members are concerned that continuation review of contract faculty is not conducted uniformly across the Divisions of the SPH and that ambiguity on review procedures may have adverse or unintended effects. Specific areas of concern are:

- (1) From queries to the Division Heads, it is clear that:
 - a. The language in the contract may not be reviewed on a regular basis (e.g., annually if the position is annually renewable) and revised as needed to the satisfaction of the faculty member, Division Head, and the Division faculty.
 - b. Annual merit review expectations (e.g., effort allocation across research, teaching, and service, and degree of excellence desired for each) for contract faculty may not be consistently documented. This is particularly true in Divisions where the contract language is not reviewed, and modified if needed, on an annual basis.
 - c. The annual review of contract faculty members is sometimes limited to a small subset of the faculty. Most Divisions have no process by which all faculty vote on continuation of an Assistant/Associate/Full Professor contract faculty member, in contrast to the annual vote that happens for Assistant/Associate Professor tenure-track. An annual review process that includes all faculty will allow contract faculty to benefit from the input of all faculty.
 - d. FCC members did not see evidence for concern in areas related to within-Division governance, establishing new or modifying existing graduate programs, and new faculty searches, in which it appears contract faculty participate fully.
- (2) There are currently a very small number of contract faculty members in the SPH (18).
- (3) The language in the 7/12 document regarding contract faculty promotion is inadequate because it is unclear what is meant by "performance criteria" in the phrase "to satisfy the performance criteria." It may be read to refer to "the candidate's performance expectations, contained in the candidate's contract," or it may be read to refer to the "standards for regular...faculty."

First, if the "performance criteria" for promotion are interpreted to be those for regular faculty, then a contract faculty member with a 100% research contract must nonetheless at some point do some teaching and some service work. This would appear to be a violation of the spirit and language of such the faculty member's contract. The ramification is then that *every* faculty contract must be written to contain some research, some teaching, and some service, so that the faculty member will be prepared for promotion when the time comes. This seems directly counter to the notion that contract faculty are hired when a specific need (usually research *or* teaching) is to be filled.

Second, the ambiguity may result in contract faculty being logically equivalent to tenure track faculty. This ambiguity may have encouraged contract faculty members to resign their positions in order to apply for tenure-track positions in the past. The ambiguity may also affect expectations of "conversion" from contract faculty to tenure-line faculty status among current and future contract faculty. FCC members are concerned that there may be unspoken expectations by contract faculty that if they excel in research, teaching, and service (no matter what the language in their contract specifies), then they will eventually be offered a tenure-track or tenured position.

Recommendations: The SPH FCC recommends that the SPH Dean convene a Task Force to develop SPH-wide guidelines for hiring, expectations, merit review, promotion review, and participation in within-Division voting and discussion on changes in policies or procedures. This Task Force should include both tenure-track/tenured and contract faculty in its membership.

The FCC also recommends that the 7.12 document passage pertaining to review of contract faculty for promotion be revised to read “the candidate’s performance expectations, contained in the candidate’s contract,”

SPH FCC Membership: James Begun, Timothy Church, Ellen Demerath (Chair), Lynn Eberly (Past Chair), Russell Luepker, Francois Sainfort, Doug Wholey