

# Rethinking Faculty Models/Roles: An Emerging Consensus about Future Directions for the Professoriate

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## About this research

Well-documented, dramatic changes in the academic workforce at American colleges and universities have occurred over the past several decades. Today, the majority of faculty members who provide instruction are nontenure-track, and it is clear that a return to the days of a largely tenure-track faculty model is highly unlikely, unless tenure were to change. What is less clear is what future faculty models should look like.

To help campus leaders envision a way forward, the TIAA Institute commissioned research by Adrianna Kezar, Elizabeth Holcombe, and Daniel Maxey, who surveyed a broad range of hundreds of higher education stakeholders about their views of numerous potential attributes of future faculty models. In contrast to popular belief, they found significant areas of common ground across stakeholder groups—a positive sign for the implementation of new faculty models that, among other goals, maintain professionalism in the faculty and support positive student outcomes. Their research results are summarized and shared herein.

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## Executive summary

This paper explores the results of a national survey of higher education stakeholders on their views about potential new faculty models. Stakeholders surveyed include faculty of all ranks and contract types, deans, provosts, board members, accreditors, and policymakers. Overall, there was agreement across stakeholder groups on many of the proposals in the survey, which laid out potential features of new faculty roles. These results indicate that there are substantial areas of common ground among faculty, administrators, and other higher education stakeholders on potential new faculty models. A major theme that emerged across these areas of agreement was the need to maintain and restore professionalism in the faculty role, through such strategies as protecting academic freedom, ensuring equitable pay and inclusion in shared governance for all faculty, and providing opportunities for growth, development, and promotion for faculty of all types. While there was consensus on many of the proposals, there were concerns registered about the feasibility of making changes. However, these pessimistic views regarding feasibility are likely due to stereotypes and external pressures that may not reflect campus realities. The areas of agreement identified in this study can serve as starting points for discussion to explore feasibility, providing points of consensus to help move the greater dialogue about the future of the faculty from mere exchange of ideas to the creation of new faculty models and roles.

## Key findings

- Overall, there was general agreement across stakeholder groups on many of the proposals, signifying areas of common ground and potential ways to move forward with implementing new faculty models.
- Some key areas of consensus include the need for more full-time faculty; ensuring some sort of scholarly component in all faculty roles; fostering more collaboration among faculty; allowing some differentiation of roles based on teaching and research; and developing a broader view of scholarship as described in Ernest Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*.
- A major theme that emerged was the need to maintain and restore professionalism in the faculty role, which concerns issues such as protecting academic freedom, career advancement, equitable pay, professional development, and inclusion in shared governance.
- Though there were many areas of consensus, some stakeholder groups demonstrated gaps between their interest in some proposals and their views on the feasibility of implementation. These areas include creativity contracts, more customized or more flexible faculty roles, and creation of consortial hiring arrangements, among others.
- A few hot button issues remain controversial, including phasing out tenure and aligning faculty work with departmental and institutional needs.

Any opinions expressed herein are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of TIAA, the TIAA Institute or any other organization with which the authors are affiliated.

## Introduction

Given the large-scale and largely unintentional changes to the faculty workforce over the last several decades, the need to thoughtfully and intentionally discuss potential characteristics of new faculty models is pressing. Earlier research has revealed that one of the reasons why it has been difficult to move forward with developing new faculty models is that there is no shared vision for the future of the faculty among key stakeholder groups including policymakers, administrators, and faculty themselves (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Lacking any shared appreciation of compelling options or ideas around which new faculty models might form, the enterprise has remained at a standstill.

In this survey study, we collected the views of more than 1,500 faculty, campus administrators, board members, accreditors, and state-level higher education policymakers to gain a better understanding of these stakeholders' views about potential new faculty models. Furthermore, the tenure-track faculty model has challenges that have gone unaddressed for decades. These include promotion and tenure standards for tenure-track faculty that prioritize research over teaching, even though most faculty roles require some focus on teaching; structural constraints that do not promote innovation and expertise in teaching; and little flexibility for institutions to move into new curricular areas or close down dwindling or obsolete areas in response to changes in the market (for more details see Kezar & Maxey, 2015). Our hope is that a greater understanding of these stakeholders' views on the attractiveness and feasibility of potential attributes of new faculty models can help to advance the conversation around the future of the faculty in meaningful and concrete ways.

## Background on the changing faculty

In recent decades, the employment model in higher education has changed markedly. Tenure-track faculty have declined as a percentage of the workforce in higher education, down from nearly 80% 45 years ago, to now only about 30 percent of the instructional faculty across all nonprofit institutions (Kezar & Maxey, 2015; NCES, 2013). Most faculty members who provide instruction at colleges and universities today are nontenure-track faculty (NTTF); the majority of them are employed as adjuncts on term-to-term contracts, receive meager compensation and usually no access to benefits, and encounter a host of unsatisfactory working conditions such as last-minute hiring, no professional development, and no input on

curriculum. This trend has extended across all institutional types, with negative consequences for student learning and development. Specifically, evidence suggests problems for first-year persistence, retention, transfers from two-year to four-year colleges, and graduation rates—with some of the most pronounced impacts seen among first-generation and remedial students—who are the focus of numerous special initiatives (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2004; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Harrington & Schibik, 2001; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Arguably, these outcomes stem from institutions' failure to properly support this growing segment of the faculty. Additionally, adjunct positions are unattractive to many potential new entrants into the profession. Faculty leaders, administrators, and leaders of national higher education associations worry about whether talented individuals will continue to go into the professoriate (Maxey & Kezar, 2015).

Despite the well-documented detriments of this contingent model, a return to a largely tenure-track faculty model is highly unlikely given current economic realities; concerns with the tenure-track model's lack of flexibility; and priorities of policymakers, legislators, and academic administrators. Furthermore, the tenure-track faculty model has challenges that have gone unaddressed for decades, including promotion and tenure standards for tenure-track faculty that prioritize research over teaching even though most faculty roles require some focus on teaching; it does not promote innovation and expertise in teaching; and, finally, the fact that the tenure model provides little flexibility for institutions to move into new curricular areas or close down dwindling or obsolete areas in response to changes in the market (for more details see Kezar & Maxey, 2015).

While there may be agreement among higher education stakeholders on the problems with current faculty models, there has been little consensus on how best to address these concerns. In prior research examining views about the changing faculty among key groups such as faculty leaders, administrators, and policymakers, we found that no group had developed a cohesive view about what the future faculty should look like. Further, several issues often are raised in discussions of barriers to moving forward and creating a new faculty model for the future. We have commonly heard two issues in particular as we have interacted with various groups on these issues over the past several years. The first perceived barrier is that there is little or no agreement across groups; in fact, it is not uncommon to encounter the view that there is a tremendous gulf between groups'

opposing views about the faculty, particularly between faculty and administrators. Faculty members, writ large, are said to be committed to the historic, traditional tenure-track and not willing to alter this model in any way, whereas administrators are said to be committed to the proliferation of adjunct positions. These two distinctive viewpoints typically are described as polarizing, making conversation between groups difficult, if not impossible. The second perceived barrier is the cost of change. Financial constraints and added costs are described as making any future models, particularly those that would seek to deliver more equitable compensation and support for all faculty, impossible to support. Critics claim that tuitions will have to increase if faculty members are to be provided any additional resources, thus justifying their support for the continual hiring of contingent faculty.

This brief addresses the first commonly cited barrier, that is, that there is little agreement across groups as to how best to move forward. Our survey data also speak to the second commonly cited barrier described above; we direct the reader to our full report for information about perceptions of budget concerns.<sup>1</sup>

This study is the first of its kind, as there previously had been no critical examination of potential future faculty models in higher education. The aim of our research was to answer the following question: What might be some key characteristics of the future faculty model in the United States? By the term “faculty model,” we mean a set of elements that make up faculty career/work that includes

contracts, roles, values, training, responsibilities, and priorities. We are not presenting a single new faculty model here; rather, we address an array of elements that together could forge future faculty models. Importantly, many of these elements were received with great interest by the various stakeholder groups surveyed, and many areas of consensus across stakeholder groups emerged.

### Methods and study design

The survey asked members of a variety of key stakeholder groups in higher education to envision the future of the faculty and to consider the attractiveness and feasibility of potential attributes that could be components in broader, yet-to-be-designed faculty models. The survey included 39 two-part, scaled-response items, each presenting a potential attribute of a future faculty model. These survey items were organized into eight categories related to faculty roles: faculty pathways; contracts; unbundling of faculty roles; status in the academic community; faculty development, promotion, and evaluation; flexibility; collaboration and community engagement; and public good roles.

The final survey was disseminated between February and March of 2015 through a number of key national higher education associations. It reached participants representing a broad range of stakeholder groups. Although no definitive roster of key stakeholders in higher education exists, we designed the selection of the sample population using Harclerod & Eaton’s (2011) empirically grounded list of higher education groups that have historically influenced issues pertaining to the faculty, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Stakeholders Responses to Survey on Rethinking Faculty Models\***

Stakeholder Group	Number of Respondents
Accreditors	23
Deans	81
Faculty: Tenured/Tenure-track	904
Faculty: Full-Time Nontenure-track	199
Faculty: Part-Time Nontenure-track	131
Governing Board Members	20
Provosts	188
State Higher Education Executive Officers	7

\*Survey administered in February and March 2015

1. The full report, *The Professoriate Reconsidered: A Study of New Faculty Models*, is available at: [www.thechangingfaculty.org](http://www.thechangingfaculty.org).

Because these groups vary in terms of the size of the stakeholder groups they represent, it was appropriate to survey some stakeholders in greater numbers than others. Accrediting agencies, state higher education executive officers, and governing boards, for example, include far fewer individuals than faculty and administration groups; thus we surveyed faculty and administrative leaders (deans and provosts) in greater numbers. Given the low numbers of stakeholders within the categories of state higher education executive officer, accreditor, and governing board member, those results should be interpreted with some caution.

We conducted descriptive and trend-data analyses to highlight similarities and differences in stakeholder views. We also provided the opportunity for participants to register open-ended responses within each section of the survey; this yielded several thousand comments, which we also analyzed. Because of the volume and extensive nature of the open-ended feedback we received, it is possible to include only a few salient samples in this report. Other publications that will focus on trends identified in the open-ended responses are forthcoming from the Delphi Project.

### A note on interpreting the data

Stakeholders registered their perceptions about the attractiveness and feasibility of each survey item using a five-point scale, ranging from not at all attractive/feasible to very attractive/feasible. Attractiveness and feasibility were explored through two different items. A “neutral” option was available to participants who may not have held strong views about an item. Since we could not interpret participants’ reasons for selecting the neutral option, we did not consider neutral responses in the analysis; rather, we focused our attention on the allocation of responses indicating more positive and more negative views on attractiveness and feasibility to evaluate support and opposition with respect to each item. Although we do not present neutral responses in the data tables in this report, we did not eliminate them entirely from the dataset; thus, it is important to note that the positive and negative responses in the data tables generally do not add up to 100 percent. The percentage of neutral responses to any given question can be derived by taking the sum of the positive and negative responses and subtracting it from 100 percent.

To conduct the analysis for this paper, we determined definitions for reporting levels of interest and agreement on survey items. We report that members of a stakeholder group were interested in or supportive of a proposal (*interest*) when more than 50% of that group responded positively to a survey item. We note that stakeholders agreed on a proposal (*agreement*) when 6 or more of the 8 groups met our threshold for interest or support.

## Key findings

### Faculty pathways

Currently, faculty work is dominated by two types of tracks or pathways: a tenure track, which typically involves faculty in research, teaching, and service in varying and sometimes unbalanced proportions; and a nontenure track, which typically employs faculty to focus primarily on one of those activities. Both of these current tracks fall short in providing support across the various activities that traditionally have been seen as comprising faculty work. The first section of the survey sought to explore stakeholders’ views about pathways and arrangements for faculty work beyond these two traditional pathways. The alternate pathways suggested in the survey could help to create a broader—and in some cases, perhaps a more customized—range of work roles, which would allow faculty to maximize their engagement in scholarship, creativity, satisfaction, and productivity.

Table 2 reports findings on stakeholders’ views of a range of possible changes and enhancements to current faculty pathways.

**Table 2: Faculty Pathways**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Faculty Pathways		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Creating opportunities for highly customized and continuously changing faculty pathways through Creativity Contracts.	A	50%	71%	61%	67%	70%	52%	75%	71%
	U	34%	17%	21%	20%	15%	22%	15%	0%
Providing multiple pathways or tracks for faculty members to pursue appointments that focus primary, long-term responsibilities in a particular area of practice.	A	53%	70%	60%	57%	68%	74%	55%	71%
	U	31%	16%	18%	21%	20%	4%	20%	14%
Advancing a more complete and widespread implementation of Ernest Boyer's Scholarship Reconsidered.	A	73%	79%	76%	88%	83%	83%	80%	71%
	U	11%	7%	7%	2%	9%	0%	10%	0%
Creating greater differentiation of faculty contracts and roles among different institutional types to ensure that distinct missions are served.	A	39%	53%	62%	63%	57%	65%	70%	71%
	U	38%	25%	19%	16%	17%	13%	25%	14%
Focusing the majority of faculty members roles throughout higher education around responsibilities for teaching and student development.	A	27%	48%	55%	53%	30%	57%	75%	71%
	U	58%	35%	31%	36%	57%	17%	15%	14%
Supporting all faculty members who teach, regardless of contract or rank, in conducting scholarship.	A	83%	84%	91%	77%	75%	87%	75%	71%
	U	7%	5%	3%	8%	12%	0%	15%	14%
Aligning individual faculty pathways more closely to departmental and institutional needs.	A	26%	31%	33%	68%	58%	56%	90%	57%
	U	48%	38%	34%	13%	21%	17%	10%	14%

A=Attractive  
U=Unattractive

Considerable agreement exists across stakeholder groups on several proposals regarding faculty pathways. First, stakeholders largely supported providing multiple pathways or tracks for faculty members to pursue appointments that focus their primary, long-term responsibilities in a particular area such as research, teaching, or professional or clinical practice. That is, they expressed support for greater flexibility and variation in the foci of faculty work and roles, as opposed to maintaining a focus on all three roles—teaching, research, and service, with a dominant role for research. Survey respondents also agreed that faculty roles should be differentiated among different types of institutions that serve distinct missions. Additionally, stakeholders supported the idea of keeping all faculty engaged in some form of scholarship regardless of their primary focus, as well as implementing the broader definition of scholarship advanced by Ernest Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Boyer advocated for a vision of scholarship that includes traditional discovery research as well as research on teaching, institutional service and community engagement, and more varied forms of research that include synthesis. Respondents were also supportive of Boyer's concept of creativity contracts, in which the primary emphasis of faculty roles shifts over the course of the contract terms (for example from teaching or designing a new course to writing a book, or to focusing on service or clinical practice), which would allow faculty to engage in a broader range of scholarly activities throughout their careers.

### Faculty contracts

The second section of the survey explored views about potential changes to faculty contracts including length, job security, full-time vs. part-time status, and reward structures. Table 3 reports findings on stakeholders' views on faculty contracts. Possibilities presented ranged from minor modifications of the current model to more extensive changes that would dramatically alter the status quo—such as completely eliminating tenure.

Several areas of agreement emerged among the stakeholder groups on the different types of contractual reforms presented in the survey. For example, a majority of respondents in each stakeholder group were interested in revising incentives and reward structures and policies to better reflect different institutional priorities. Stakeholders agree that teaching institutions, for example, should provide salary increases based on teaching excellence. Survey respondents also were generally interested in consortium agreements, which allow neighboring institutions to develop

arrangements to create shared, full-time faculty positions for individuals who otherwise would be hired by multiple institutions individually, often on part-time contracts. There also was agreement among most stakeholder groups on creating more full-time nontenure-track positions to reduce reliance on part-time positions, although the levels of interest were mixed across groups. Additionally, there was agreement among most stakeholder groups on adding teaching-only tenured positions to the faculty.

### Unbundling faculty roles

The third section of the survey presented a number of potential attributes of future faculty models that involved professional and instructional unbundling, thus breaking the triad of research, teaching, and service. Instructional unbundling refers to separating the different roles involved with teaching into course design, delivery, assessment, and advising (Paulson, 2002; Smith, 2008, 2010). Many experts on faculty issues believe that the unbundling of faculty roles is a trend that is likely to continue; in light of this, it is important to understand some of the ways that unbundling will affect faculty roles in the years to come (Kezar, Gehrke, & Maxey, 2014). Kezar, Gehrke, and Maxey, 2014 examine the research on unbundling which demonstrates some negative impacts that suggest caution when moving in this direction, particularly when unbundling teaching.

Table 4 reports findings on stakeholders' views on unbundling faculty roles.

While survey responses revealed several key points of agreement on possible changes to faculty pathways and to contracts, as described above, reactions were generally more mixed on the question of unbundling faculty roles. Some stakeholder groups' responses to each item in this section failed to meet our thresholds for determining agreement on the attractiveness of the proposals (that is, 6 out of 8 groups with 50% or more responding favorably indicates agreement). Among these contested questions, one proposal that was met with agreement across groups was the proposal to expand the number of positions that focus more exclusively on either teaching, research, or service, rather than retaining the emphasis on all three roles within most faculty positions. This proposal reflects a trend that has been occurring over the last 30 to 40 years; it is possible that interest in it is a reflection of stakeholders' familiarity with this ongoing trend.



**Table 3: Faculty Contracts**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Contracts		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Phasing out tenure in favor of multi-year, renewable contracts.	A	9%	45%	46%	51%	25%	52%	68%	57%
	U	86%	39%	43%	43%	67%	35%	21%	14%
Maintaining a tenure track, but modifying it by implementing term-tenure contracts eligible for renewal every 10–15 years.	A	14%	40%	40%	40%	31%	48%	60%	57%
	U	74%	40%	41%	48%	54%	17%	35%	29%
Adding teaching-only tenure positions to the faculty.	A	45%	77%	67%	46%	57%	74%	50%	57%
	U	37%	12%	18%	31%	30%	9%	25%	29%
Maintaining a faculty model that closely resembles the current system of tenure-track, full-time nontenure-track, and part-time faculty, but with some modifications.	A	58%	33%	38%	53%	66%	52%	32%	14%
	U	16%	37%	42%	20%	10%	13%	42%	57%
Increasing the utilization of full-time nontenure-track appointments to reduce reliance on part-time positions.	A	63%	77%	67%	70%	86%	70%	79%	83%
	U	21%	13%	22%	17%	7%	13%	15%	14%
Creating consortium agreements among local institutions to develop shared, full-time faculty positions.	A	59%	62%	73%	50%	51%	70%	50%	71%
	U	26%	24%	17%	28%	26%	9%	20%	14%
Revising incentives and rewards structures and policies to better reflect different institutional priorities.	A	61%	64%	58%	65%	74%	91%	65%	86%
	U	15%	10%	16%	12%	11%	4%	20%	14%

A=Attractive  
U=Unattractive

**Table 4: Unbundling of Faculty Roles**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Unbundling of Faculty Roles		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Expanding the number of positions that are focused more exclusively on teaching, research, or service.	A	36%	60%	59%	42%	43%	70%	50%	86%
	U	42%	19%	19%	32%	37%	13%	15%	14%
Increasing the use of technology and instructional software to give faculty members opportunities to use in-person class time to engage students.	A	40%	48%	42%	78%	77%	87%	100%	86%
	U	33%	28%	31%	6%	5%	4%	0%	0%
Making greater use of educational professionals whose roles complement the knowledge and skills of traditional faculty members.	A	39%	42%	41%	63%	61%	70%	65%	71%
	U	38%	29%	40%	19%	23%	9%	10%	0%
Unbundling the instructional role to focus faculty members' attention on the most essential tasks, such as curriculum development, course design, and outcomes assessment.	A	23%	30%	32%	38%	35%	61%	42%	71%
	U	55%	47%	43%	40%	44%	13%	21%	0%

A=Attractive  
U=Unattractive

### Status and professionalism in the academic community

Some of the highest levels of interest expressed in proposals presented in the survey, as well as the highest levels of agreement across stakeholder groups, were found in response to survey items concerning the improvement of status and professionalism across academic ranks. Table 5 shows these many areas of agreement.

All stakeholder groups agreed on the importance of ensuring that all faculty members have the same protections for academic freedom, equitable compensation for performing similar duties, and access to all the information and tools needed to do their jobs. There was agreement across groups on the idea of permitting all faculty members to be involved in shared governance, although levels of interest were mixed: the highest levels of interest were seen among nontenure-track faculty and accreditors.

**Table 5: Status and Professionalism in the Academic Community**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Status in the Academic Community		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Ensuring that all faculty members have the same rights and protections with regard to academic freedom.	A	92%	96%	95%	95%	90%	96%	100%	86%
	U	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Providing all faculty members equitable compensation for performing the same duties, as well as access to benefits.	A	87%	94%	97%	80%	88%	91%	80%	86%
	U	6%	0%	2%	10%	8%	5%	20%	0%
Permitting all faculty members to be involved in shared governance and decision making that affects their work.	A	72%	92%	93%	67%	69%	91%	75%	57%
	U	16%	5%	2%	16%	15%	0%	10%	14%
Providing all faculty members access to all the information and tools needed to do their jobs.	A	96%	97%	98%	96%	99%	96%	90%	100%
	U	2%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%

A=Attractive  
U=Unattractive

Although the findings from this section might seem intuitive, the strong agreement about ensuring equitable status across faculty ranks often does not reflect the current conditions experienced by nontenure-track faculty, particularly part-time or adjunct faculty, on campuses and in departments. It is possible that some participants responded to this section of the survey with what they believed to be the most socially desirable responses. However, a more complete picture emerges when these responses are considered alongside the strong levels of interest throughout the survey in proposals to revise or redesign those aspects of the current arrangements that have perpetuated inequity and status differentiations. In the context of these findings, it is reasonable to conclude that these responses reflect a genuine concern about the growing reliance of higher education on a system of contingent labor that has implications for institutions, for

the ability of faculty to do their jobs, and for the future of academic professionalism.

### Faculty development, promotion, and evaluation

Similar to the questions on status in the academic community, survey questions on faculty development, promotion, and evaluation produced high levels of agreement—with stakeholder groups unified in their interest in the proposals presented. Table 6 reports findings on stakeholders' views in these areas.

Stakeholder groups uniformly agreed on the value of clearly defining expectations and evaluation criteria for all faculty members, and ensuring that all faculty members receive clear terms for notification of renewal or termination. Although there was unified agreement on

clarifying expectations and evaluation criteria, interest in creating more rigorous processes and expectations for regularly scheduled evaluations, while still positive across stakeholder groups, was more mixed. There also was unified agreement that proposals providing all faculty members with opportunities for promotion were attractive, with most groups showing strong levels of interest. All stakeholder groups indicated their interest in the proposal that in future

faculty models all faculty members be continuously engaged in professional development opportunities. Finally, there also was unified agreement that the proposal to include participation in periodic professional development as a requirement for promotion and evaluation was attractive, although faculty found this proposal slightly less attractive than did other groups.

**Table 6: Faculty Development, Promotion, and Evaluation**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Faculty Development, Promotion, and Evaluation		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Providing all faculty members with opportunities for promotion.	A	86%	96%	97%	75%	92%	95%	70%	71%
	U	5%	2%	2%	7%	4%	5%	10%	14%
Clearly defining expectations and evaluation criteria for all faculty members.	A	96%	94%	95%	97%	97%	100%	100%	100%
	U	2%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ensuring that all faculty members receive clear terms for notification of renewal or termination, as well as grievance processes.	A	98%	96%	96%	98%	96%	96%	100%	100%
	U	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Continuously engaging all faculty members in development opportunities that help them maintain knowledge, learn about and practice using pedagogies and high-impact practices, and utilize learning outcomes assessment.	A	90%	93%	92%	94%	100%	96%	85%	100%
	U	3%	0%	3%	2%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Including participation in periodic professional development as a requirement.	A	54%	67%	68%	81%	81%	82%	70%	71%
	U	26%	15%	19%	7%	13%	5%	5%	0%
Creating a more rigorous process and expectations for regularly scheduled evaluation.	A	51%	61%	53%	83%	76%	86%	95%	86%
	U	26%	13%	15%	7%	14%	5%	0%	0%

A=Attractive  
U=Unattractive

## Flexibility

The faculty role, especially the tenure-track model, historically has been designed in a very singular and linear manner, with only one career track available; that is, faculty members typically proceed through seven years to tenure, and have opportunities for promotions at standardized intervals thereafter. This rigid schedule often narrows faculty members' focus to only those tasks that are most directly aligned with tenure; this often leads to a focus on research at the expense of teaching, curriculum development, or other types of institutional service (Fairweather, 1996; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Considering faculty beyond the tenure track, we examined flexibility in terms of personal and professional obligations. Increased flexibility would allow faculty members to meet such obligations, while also benefiting the mission and operations of the institution. More flexible options would enable faculty members to attend to various personal responsibilities and life circumstances, while reducing their stress levels so that

they are more capable of performing at their highest level while at work. These arrangements also would demonstrate that institutions care about the well-being of all members of the campus community, which would send positive messages to students, faculty, and staff.

We included a section on flexibility in the survey to gauge how stakeholders perceive new faculty models that could address these issues. Table 7 reports findings on stakeholders' views on these possibilities.

Stakeholders across most groups demonstrated strong interest in granting greater flexibility for tenure-track faculty members, such as by allowing them to stop the tenure clock or to move to part-time appointments to care for children and family, or to attend to other sorts of situations that may arise. There also was agreement on the need to create greater flexibility for faculty members to address personal needs on campus.

**Table 7: Flexibility**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Flexibility		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Creating greater employment flexibility for full-time, tenure-track faculty members by stopping the tenure clock or allowing them to move to part-time appointments temporarily, as needed.	A	85%	82%	76%	74%	83%	77%	74%	100%
	U	4%	7%	10%	12%	3%	5%	11%	0%
Lengthening probationary periods for more traditional tenure-eligible faculty.	A	48%	55%	44%	44%	40%	36%	42%	33%
	U	26%	13%	18%	33%	24%	27%	32%	50%
Creating greater flexibility for faculty to address personal needs on campus.	A	73%	73%	73%	62%	81%	50%	42%	71%
	U	8%	8%	9%	17%	10%	18%	32%	14%

A=Attractive

U=Unattractive

## Collaboration and community engagement

This section of the survey sought to explore stakeholders' views on a few key proposals about the nature of cross-campus collaboration, interdisciplinary work, and engagement with external communities and groups, and how these ideas should be incorporated into faculty work and roles. Table 8 reports findings on stakeholders' views in these areas.

All stakeholder groups were unified in their agreement that encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration; fostering connections between faculty members and the community; and creating new partnerships with industry, business, nonprofits, and government were attractive ideas to incorporate into future faculty models. These positive reactions may be a reflection of the fact that many institutions already have begun to pursue and implement policies and practices to institutionalize these sorts of ideas, which were described in the open-ended comments on survey.

**Table 8: Collaboration and Community Engagement**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Collaboration and Community Engagement		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Encouraging and facilitating greater opportunities for faculty members to collaborate with one another and across disciplines.	A	85%	83%	84%	90%	96%	86%	84%	100%
	U	4%	5%	4%	2%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Fostering greater connections between faculty members and the communities served by institutions.	A	73%	76%	74%	88%	83%	82%	84%	57%
	U	9%	6%	6%	3%	1%	0%	5%	0%
Creating new partnerships with industry, business, corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies.	A	63%	64%	64%	89%	87%	82%	95%	100%
	U	15%	16%	14%	2%	0%	5%	0%	0%

A=Attractive

U=Unattractive

## Faculty roles and the public good

This section of the survey sought to explore ways that contributing to the public good might be formally incorporated into faculty work and roles, and thereby maintained as a commitment in the future. Table 9 reports findings on stakeholders' views of these approaches.

All stakeholder groups agreed that faculty should be encouraged to support low-income and first-generation college students through undergraduate research, mentoring, bridge programs, and first-year college experiences. Most survey respondents demonstrated interest in encouraging

and rewarding faculty for playing the role of social critics and doing research on controversial issues that are a part of the current public discourse. We also found agreement among most stakeholder groups that it was a good idea to encourage faculty to conduct research that is available to the public, steering them away from publications that require payment or otherwise restrict access to scholarship. However, groups demonstrated somewhat lower levels of interest in this proposal, which could reflect the dominance of more restricted platforms and the strong pressures for faculty to publish in prestigious journals, which are less likely to be open access (see, for example, Speier et al., 1999; or Xia, 2010).

**Table 9: Faculty Roles and the Public Good**

Including frequency of positive and negative responses on attractiveness for each group, in percentages

Public Good		Tenure-Track Faculty	Full-Time NTTF	Part-Time NTTF	Provosts	Deans	Accreditors	Governing Boards	SHEEOs
Encouraging and rewarding faculty to engage in social critique and research on controversial issues.	A	68%	70%	74%	59%	73%	64%	68%	43%
	U	10%	11%	5%	11%	6%	5%	0%	14%
Defining expectations for how faculty members will contribute to shaping the development of citizenship among students.	A	48%	61%	61%	72%	69%	68%	84%	86%
	U	23%	15%	17%	7%	11%	5%	5%	0%
Encouraging faculty to support low-income and first-generation college students.	A	83%	78%	84%	89%	89%	81%	95%	100%
	U	5%	6%	6%	1%	1%	10%	0%	0%
Encouraging faculty to conduct research that is available to the public (limiting research that restricts open access).	A	52%	52%	59%	48%	51%	55%	61%	29%
	U	18%	16%	12%	11%	18%	23%	6%	0%

A=Attractive

U=Unattractive

## Some hot button issues to consider

While most of the survey responses indicated a great deal of consensus among stakeholders, a few key areas of disagreement on the future direction of the faculty emerged. These may be hot button issues that campus leaders will wish to navigate carefully as they begin discussions on potential new faculty models:

- First, there was major disagreement about phasing out tenure, with tenured faculty and deans seeing this as a very unattractive option and nontenure-track faculty and other groups seeing this as either positive or neutral. Given stakeholders' different experiences with tenure, this lack of agreement is not surprising.
- One proposal that was notable in its universal lack of support was termed tenure, in which faculty members would be given tenure for limited amounts of time, such as 15 or 20 years. Open-ended comments suggest that this proposal is not well understood, with some stakeholders concerned it is too much like existing arrangements and others fearing it would do away with too many of the benefits and protections of tenure.
- Another area of disagreement was on having faculty more closely align their work to departmental and institutional needs rather than on their personal or professional goals and interests. Faculty of all types disagreed with this proposal, while policymakers, academic administrators, and board members views of it were more favorable. It is likely that the long-held tradition and value of faculty autonomy within the academy is driving this disagreement. Conversations about future faculty roles must acknowledge this tradition while also connecting to the importance of aligning with departmental and institutional goals to promote increased student success and collaboration that groups noted as important.

## Gaps between attractiveness and feasibility

We have noted throughout this report that, contrary to prevailing expectations, stakeholder groups generally agree on the attractiveness of many policies and practices related to new faculty models. In addition to the attractiveness of such proposed changes, however, we also asked respondents from each group to consider whether a particular proposed practice was feasible. As reported in the tables above, survey data revealed many proposals and practices that several stakeholder groups considered feasible, particularly those regarding professionalizing the faculty and faculty development, promotion, and evaluation.

However, other areas of the survey revealed gaps between stakeholders' levels of interest in a particular statement or proposal and their perceptions of its feasibility of implementation. We were particularly interested in examining statements or proposals that had gaps of 25 or more percentage points across five or more stakeholder groups. These so-called feasibility gaps were found in 11 areas, including:

- creativity contracts
- Boyer's model
- consortium agreements
- both phasing out tenure and maintaining the status quo
- protecting academic freedom across all faculty ranks
- ensuring equitable compensation for all faculty
- engaging all faculty in professional development
- providing promotion opportunities for all faculty members
- creating more flexibility for tenure-track faculty members and meeting more personal needs on campus
- encouraging faculty to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary, or community-engaged work
- developing citizenship among students

Open-ended comments from the survey provided context to the feasibility gaps we found between stakeholders' support of proposals for new faculty models and their beliefs about the feasibility of implementing these ideas. While comments reflected a wide variety of opinions, stakeholders repeatedly indicated concerns about the complexities and logistical difficulties of implementing changes to the faculty model, anticipating resistance from other campus stakeholders, and budgetary constraints. Unquestionably, logistical complexities will arise from any major changes to the faculty role. However, it is likely that these feasibility gaps reflect, at least in part, stereotypes or misconceptions that most other stakeholders will not be supportive of an idea. As we have seen from our survey results, the levels of agreement disprove these assumptions. Rather than abandon efforts to change faculty roles due to perceived obstacles, we recommend that campus stakeholders prioritize further discussions of new models to develop viable ways forward.



## Conclusion

Overall, these survey results demonstrate greater-than-anticipated agreement among higher education stakeholders on the attractiveness of many proposals for the future of the faculty. Virtually every section of the survey included items that multiple stakeholder groups agreed were attractive. These findings are heartening to us as we consider the crossroads at which the academic community finds itself today. As stakeholders across institutions navigate the path forward, they will need to consider the sorts of questions at the core of this research and its findings, such as: What new types of faculty positions are needed? How will the roles of faculty members be structured and organized in order to best serve our students, our institutions' missions, and the rapidly evolving expectations of our society? What steps can be taken to ensure that values relating to academic professionalism are enshrined in faculty positions? What models can help all faculty members—regardless of their individual faculty rank or the focus of their work—meet the current and future needs of the higher education enterprise?


Survey results point to many areas of agreement that can serve as starting points for discussions, helping to spur productive dialogues that will help viable and worthy ideas about the future of the faculty become realities. The study dispels pervasive myths that suggest a tremendous and impassable gulf between stakeholder groups' views about the purpose and structure of the faculty. Efforts to consider, design, and implement future faculty models are far more likely to be successful when a diverse group of stakeholders are involved and engaged in each stage of the process. Thus we are hopeful that these survey findings can help to provoke a collaborative dialogue about needed change.

Finally, the survey results highlight the potential to envision and adopt a greater diversity of roles beyond the traditional tenure track and the nontenure-track positions that have grown to become a majority of the professoriate. The data presented here offer valuable insights about proposals that might be discussed, adopted or adapted as needed, and implemented as institutions—and the higher education enterprise as a whole—explore the future of the faculty.<sup>2</sup>

2. Readers interested in developing new faculty models on their campuses are urged to consult *Adapting by Design* (2015), which outlines an approach for campuses to begin thoughtfully and strategically redesigning faculty roles. See [www.thechangingfaculty.org](http://www.thechangingfaculty.org)

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