



USC University of Southern California

MEMORANDUM

To: The USC Academic Senate Executive Board

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Subject: “The Future of Faculty Work” Preliminary Findings

Overview

This memo is designed to share the preliminary findings of the The Research, Teaching, Practitioner, and Clinical (RTPC) Faculty Affairs committee, following our assigned task to consider the future of RTPC faculty at USC. In response to this important charge, committee members conducted a literature review on the changing role of RTPC faculty in higher education. The extensive research on this topic by Rossier faculty Adrianna Kezar was especially useful in this regard; in *Envisioning the Faculty for the 21st Century*, Kezar (2016) emphasizes “the need to design and develop faculty roles and contracts that are better aligned with the diverse needs of our higher education system, which is composed of various types of institutions striving to achieve a range of outcomes” (p. 213). As a first step towards that goal, the committee examined ongoing efforts—at both USC and peer institutions—to move towards a more inclusive, equitable future for RTPC. Although this research will continue into the 2022-2023 academic year, our preliminary findings (outlined in brief below) suggest various opportunities exist to advance the professionalization of RTPC faculty at USC, and consequently both improve student outcomes and further the educational mission of the university in the future.

Preliminary Findings

By approaching our initial research exercise from a student-first perspective, we felt it possible to both reimagine the future of USC RTPC faculty work and improve student outcomes. A handful of familiar foci emerged around funding, benefits, advancement/track definitions, and security of employment. These include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Increasing overall financial support and investment in RTPC faculty by the University (e.g. start-up funds, publication and conference funds, expanded internal grant opportunities, and unified access to sabbaticals), in addition to addressing salary disparity through equity and compression adjustments.

- Allowing for profile flexibility (i.e. creating pathways for RTPC faculty to move between research/practice and teaching, and offering expanded access to course releases for field-related research), thereby supporting department/school/University mission and goals.
- Addressing job security concerns by unifying contract language across the University (e.g. removing at-will language, implementing multi-year commitments, and increasing access to continuing employment for full professors).
- Unifying guidelines across the University for merit/promotion reviews, and increasing transparency in the processes for RTPC faculty to dispute evaluations/findings with regards to advancement.

Much progress has been made toward these goals through the work of this committee over the past several years. By revisiting earlier recommendations, these efforts will not be doubled, and instead will allow for advocating greater change more quickly on an institutional level.

Moving Forward

As there is no clear standard with regards to RTPC faculty across US institutions, USC has an opportunity to become a leader in this sector by setting new models that increase retention and better utilize the intellectual capital of their RTPC faculty, thereby enhancing performance and improving student outcomes. The above focus areas will serve as a guide for our research in the fall of 2022. We also recommend including Rossier School of Education faculty [Dr. Adrianna Kezar](#) in our collective effort, as she is one of the foremost thought-leaders on this topic.

For your reference, please find links to some of Dr. Kezar's work below:

Kezar, Adrianna. *Embracing Non-Tenure Track Faculty: Changing Campuses for the New Faculty Majority*. Routledge, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203828434>

Kezar, Adrianna, and Julie Posselt. *Higher Education Administration for Social Justice and Equity: Critical Perspectives for Leadership*. 1st ed., vol. 1, Routledge, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429435140>

Adrianna Kezar, et al. *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019. EBSCOhost, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2091609>