
CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING FOCUSED FACULTY IN CANADA: RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

BACKGROUND

The role of the faculty member in higher education is transforming. In the face of external pressures, institutions have relied increasingly on a temporary workforce, particularly in the United States—a move that many recognize as problematic for institutions, students, and the faculty involved (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). A growing number of Canadian institutions are implementing tenure-track or permanent faculty positions that specialize in teaching (and may or may not include other forms of scholarship such as conducting original research). Debates continue without much scholarly understanding of these positions (c.f., Vajoczki, Fenton, Menard, & Pollon, 2011). Thus, at STLHE 2015, we launched a survey to understand the experiences of Teaching Focused Faculty (TFF). This talk summarizes some key findings from that survey.

SURVEY DESIGN

Quantitative Questions

Activities in last 2 years, perceived expectations by institution and department (2 items)

Sense of value, potential predictors of (20 items)

Exploratory questions about work (17 items)

Demographics (10 items)

Qualitative Questions

Identify key strengths, challenges, barriers, aids to success (5 items). Analysis ongoing.

PARTICIPANTS

Initial Sample

251 TFF (18 Canadian Institutions, 7 provinces)

Final sample

165 TFF from two very large research intensive universities that offer tenure to TFF (UBC, Toronto).

Highest frequency demographic characteristics: 58% female, 26% natural sciences, 33% have 5-9 years of teaching experience, 62% have received at least one teaching award.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE LITERATURE

The nature of faculty work is changing.

- The traditional 40% research, 40% teaching, 20% service split of faculty work is unrealistic in practice for many faculty members (Fairweather, 2002). Some argue that teaching and research cannot be separated without sacrificing integrity of faculty role (e.g., Chapnick, 2012).
- Teaching is becoming increasingly professionalized, evidenced by various adjacent specialist support roles (Macfarlane, 2011). It is becoming more difficult for faculty to teach “effectively.”
- Teaching-only sessional faculty positions are common, but can exploit workers and over-burden permanent faculty with service (Kezar & Maxey, 2014).

Faculty tend to feel positively about their jobs and feeling valued is important.

- Research focused faculty tend to have high job satisfaction (Teichler et al., 2013); sessional faculty have low job satisfaction (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Where do TFF lie on this continuum?
- The only prior study of TFF revealed high job satisfaction but also reports of stigmatization for focusing on teaching in university cultures that value research highly (Vajoczki et al., 2011).
- Feeling one’s contributions are *valued* by colleagues predicts faculty intentions to pursue their career goals (Campbell & O’Meara, 2014) and their job satisfaction (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011).

Little prior research exists to illuminate the nature of TFF work and why they value their positions.

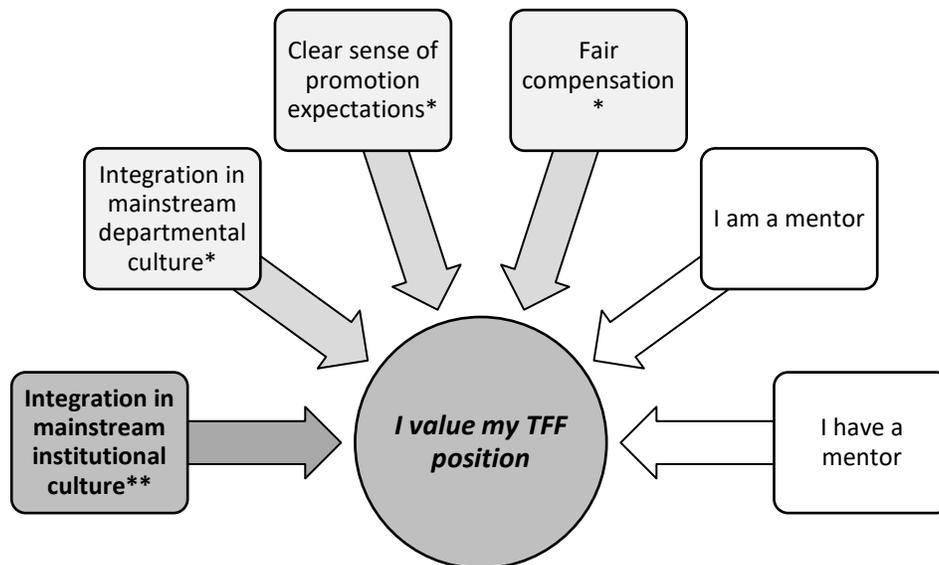
WHAT WE LEARNED FROM RESPONDENTS

What activities have TFF completed in the last 2 years?

- The typical TFF has completed 11/20 teaching, research, service, and professional development activities listed; 90% of the sample engaged in 5-18 activities. Most common activities (>86% selection): teaching undergraduate courses, departmental service, attending conferences, participating in workshops and/or seminars.
- Interpreting medians implies that the typical TFF member engaged in all of the following activities in the last two years: taught 6 undergraduate courses, supervised 2 student research projects, submitted 1 funding application, presented at 2 conferences and attended 3, participated in 4 workshops, served on 1 Faculty-level and 3 Department-level committees, and led or encouraged curriculum development.
- TFF sometimes perceived discrepancies in what institutions versus departments expected of them, and, overall reported doing more activities than what they perceived was expected.

TFF value their positions highly.

- 93% of TFF surveyed rated they *agree* or *strongly agree* to the statement “I personally value my TFF position” ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.66$; five point scale ranged from 1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*).
- 5 potential predictors correlated positively with value ratings (r s from .120 to .404). Significant raw correlations are indicated by * in diagram. Together these predictors explained 22% of variance in value ratings.
- In a regression analysis, *feeling integrated in mainstream institutional culture* offered unique prediction of value ratings, above and beyond any effect of the other predictors.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Dr. Catherine Rawn
Senior Instructor, Psychology Department
Chair, Instructor Network Leadership Team
University of British Columbia
cdrawn@psych.ubc.ca
www.psych.ubc.ca/~cdrawn
Twitter: @cdrawn

Dr. Joanne Fox
Principal, Vantage College
Professor of Teaching, Michael Smith Laboratories and
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
University of British Columbia
joanne.fox@ubc.ca
Twitter: @joannealisonfox

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Boyer, E. L., Altbach, P. G., & Whitelaw, M. J. (1994). *The academic profession: An international perspective*. Princeton: Carnegie Foundation.
- Boyer, E. L., Moser, D., Ream, T. C., & Braxton, J. M. (2015). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate, Expanded Edition*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bozeman, B., & Gaughan, M. (2011). Job satisfaction among university faculty: Individual, work, and institutional determinants. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 82, 154-186.
- Campbell, C. M., & O'Meara, K. A. (2014). Faculty agency: Departmental contexts that matter in faculty careers. *Research in Higher Education*, 55, 1, 49-74.
- Chapnick, A. (2012, October 10). The teaching-only stream: Are we headed up a creek without a paddle? *University Affairs*. Retrieved 5 July 2016 from <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/the-teaching-only-stream/>
- Fairweather, J. S. (2002). The mythologies of faculty productivity: Implications for institutional policy and decision making. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73, 26-48.
- Kezar, A., & Maxey, D. (2014). Troubling ethical lapses: The treatment of contingent faculty. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, 46, 34-37. DOI: 10.1080/00091383.2014.925761
- Teichler, U., Arimoto, A., & Cummings, W. K. (2013). *The Changing Academic Profession: Major Findings of a Comparative Survey*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Vajoczki, S., Fenton, N., Menard, K., & Pollon, D. (2011). *Teaching-Stream Faculty in Ontario Universities*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.
-