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## The Faculty

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### For These Professors, 'Practice' Is Perfect

**A category of full-time faculty members, who concentrate on teaching but are not eligible for tenure, gains favor on some campuses**

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Durham, N.C.




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Clare J. Tufts knows how to get students talking. It is two days before spring break starts, the kind of balmy, sunny day when Duke University students would rather be playing Frisbee on the quad than reciting French nouns in a stuffy classroom.

*Quand allez-vous partir pour les vacances?* she asks students in her morning phonetics class. *Qui a gagné le grand match de basket hier soir?* The class perks up and starts discussing last night's basketball game in French.

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During the 45-minute class, Ms. Tufts, who has taught here since 1987, jumps from activity to activity, incorporating an overhead projector, the Internet, and a CD player. She separates the class into teams to see who can pronounce a tongue twister the fastest, and doles out chocolate euro coins to the winners.

The professor takes teaching seriously. It is her luxury to spend most of her time in the classroom, trying new methods, advising students, and training others to teach. That is because Ms. Tufts is not actually a professor of French. She is a "professor of the practice" of French.

The distinction is a big one.

At Duke, professors of the practice are full-time faculty members who are not on the tenure track. They are evaluated primarily on teaching and do not have to produce groundbreaking research like their tenured colleagues. In return, they have renewable contracts lasting from 3 to 10 years, with an average minimum contract of 5 years. Their salaries, administrators say, are comparable to those of their tenured and tenure-track colleagues, although tenured full professors have, on average, greater opportunities for top salaries. Professors of the practice do get

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the same fringe benefits, except they are not guaranteed sabbaticals.

About 10 percent of Duke's total faculty, including 97 professors in such disciplines as the arts, biology, languages, mathematics, and statistics, now fall into this special category, which was created here more than a decade ago.

While Duke has had this system the longest, other institutions have taken heed. Emory University has modeled a program partly on Duke's. Lecturers there focus on teaching and, while their renewable contracts can cover no more than five years, they enjoy many of the rights and benefits of tenured faculty members. The number of participants has grown from about 20 to about 90 since the program began in 1996, according to Emory.

And New York University's president, John E. Sexton, has proposed several new classifications of professors who would be full time, but not on the tenure track.

"New forms of faculty ought to exist ... because they bring value to the academic enterprise," Mr. Sexton wrote in a proposal for NYU's trustees last summer.

Such faculty restructuring might offer a solution to problems caused by a growing reliance on part-timers for undergraduate teaching on campuses today. Administrators at Duke say that having faculty members who focus primarily on teaching and are integral to university life provides stability. It improves the institution's ability to offer a first-rate curriculum, and it rewards people who do important work, they say.

But at a time when the U.S. Department of Education has found that more than half of all new full-time faculty members at four-year institutions are not on the tenure track, and the number of adjuncts has skyrocketed, many people are suspicious of the concept.

Teaching, some critics say, should be the purview of tenured professors. "It's essential for the regular faculty, the tenured faculty, to take teaching as seriously as they take their research," says John W. Etchemendy, provost of Stanford University, which has only a few full-time, non-tenure-track teaching professors, and the number is dwindling.

"I see this as one more increase in the loss of tenured jobs," says Keith Hoeller, a long-time adjunct and cofounder of the Washington Part-Time Faculty Association, in Washington state. He is also a member of the American Association of University Professors' Committee on Contingent Faculty and the Profession, which strives to improve conditions for part-time and non-tenure-track faculty members. He worries about protecting the academic freedom and job security of non-tenure-track professors, especially at cash-strapped public institutions

that don't have the resources of Duke, NYU, or Stanford.

Most professors who are not on the tenure track, largely adjuncts, receive lower pay and fewer benefits than their tenured colleagues, creating a growing group of second-class faculty members. Still, professors of the practice at Duke say they are treated as valued colleagues and are happy with their jobs, most of them for the simple reason that they love to teach.

"I just get a real intense pleasure when that light bulb comes on and students start communicating," says Ms. Tufts.

### **An Inferior Track?**

After two years on the tenure track as an assistant professor of statistics at Duke, Dalene K. Stangl came to a realization. "It was pretty clear my talents were far better in the classroom than in research," says the professor on a leisurely walk across Duke's grassy campus.

Ms. Stangl, who has a Ph.D. in statistics, also believed that her publications were not good enough to earn her tenure. "At Duke, they tell you you've got to be in the top half of your department to get tenure," she says. "I didn't think I could pedal that fast."

So with the administration's blessing, in 2000 Ms. Stangl switched off the tenure track and became an assistant professor of the practice of statistics. Now she teaches two introductory-statistics classes of 150 students each, plus a computing laboratory. She also supervises one graduate and 13 undergraduate teaching assistants. She declines to say how long her contract runs.

Each department at Duke evaluates professors of the practice using different criteria, but teaching always counts most. Ms. Stangl says she is also expected to maintain a national profile in her field and make time for research, but it can have an applied focus. She has edited two books on applied statistics and written about 60 papers. She also edits *Chance*, a magazine about practical applications of statistics in fields like law and sports.

Ms. Stangl is one of just a few professors of the practice at Duke who are chairmen of their departments. Professors of the practice are not allowed to vote on tenure cases, but Ms. Stangl is an exception. In the case of a tie on a tenure or search-committee vote, as chairman she wields the tie-breaking vote. Ms. Stangl writes evaluations and sets raises for the statistics faculty, including her nine tenured and tenure-track colleagues and two other professors of the practice.

"It's a very good thing for POP's to also be in the position of leadership and decision making," she says. "I truly believe that what I do is as valuable as what the tenured faculty does."

But do the tenured professors feel the same way? Or are they just happy that these faculty members make their lives easier by handling the grunt work, such as teaching introductory classes and training teaching assistants?

Jack Bookman, an associate professor of the practice of mathematics, says he has felt the sting of academic snobbery in more than 20 years at Duke. The first few he spent as a part-time instructor, before becoming a POP in 1991. Mr. Bookman has a master's degree in mathematics and a doctorate in education, but not a math Ph.D. "The tenured faculty viewed us as housekeeping staff," he says. "Will you just take care of this? We're the real professors."

Today, however, having been around for more than a decade, professors of the practice have largely proved themselves to their tenured colleagues. "People are realizing ... we know something about pedagogy they don't know," he says. Still, someone with a more-fragile ego might feel uncomfortable in the position.

A former high-school teacher, Mr. Bookman is in his element in the classroom. During an afternoon class, he bounces around the room in his Nikes, pausing by a group of students at work on a calculus problem. Hands clasped behind his back, he bends over to check their worksheets. A student asks, "Are we on the right track for B?" The professor beams. "More than on the right track," he says. "You've got to find out what C is, then you're on a roll." And he's on to the next group.

Mr. Bookman marvels at his students. "It's amazing to watch," he says. "They say, 'Go away, I'm learning.' ... Sometimes I just sit back and watch them. It's really nice."

### **A New Status**

Like most universities, Duke's non-tenure-track faculty used to comprise mostly adjuncts and lecturers who worked on one-year contracts. Duke's provost, Peter Lange, says that in the late 1980s and early '90s, the university took a look at those arrangements and thought it could do better.

"We decided that was not a just thing to do nor was it good for the overall quality of the work being done and the faculty as a whole," says Mr. Lange. The professor-of-the-practice rank would be a way to recognize and reward good teachers.

Another special faculty designation created at the time was that of research professor, a rank that is widespread at other colleges and universities. Like professors of the practice, research professors are full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members. They are judged mainly on their research activities. They usually do not have to teach, although some of them choose to, and their salaries are paid mostly by outside grants.

Over all, both types of professors make up about one-fifth of the faculty of arts and science at Duke. They generally compete in a national search process, have many of the same privileges as tenured and tenure-track professors, but are evaluated differently. They face rigorous review procedures, though each department has leeway in its evaluation criteria and research expectations. A language professor of the practice might be expected to produce a textbook or articles on teaching, while public performances might suffice for a music professor of the practice.

They can hold the rank of assistant, associate, or full professor of the practice or research professor. Most departments require external letters of support for promotion. Although sabbaticals are not a normal part of the benefits package, they can apply for them. Both types of professors were recently given full voting rights in the Academic Council, Duke's faculty governing body, but they are not allowed to vote on tenure and appointments.

Professors of the practice were initially clustered in the languages and the arts, and research professors in medical areas, but both have since spread throughout the university. "I think it's worked extremely well," says Mr. Lange. "It's given worthy status to people."

But departments were allowed to decide on their own whether to hire the professors, and not all departments embraced the idea. Duke's department of psychological and brain sciences, for example, does not hire professors of the practice and never has. Michael A. Wallach, a tenured professor of psychology who came to Duke in 1962, says the department does not want to segregate teaching.

"Teaching is heavily wedded to research," says Mr. Wallach. Having professors of the practice in his department "would tend to suggest something of a second-class citizenship, which is against what we want to promote." He says it could create "a status difference that is hard to beat down."

But the professors of the practice themselves generally like the position. Ms. Tufts says it allows her flexibility to create new courses and apply for grants, and yet there is no pressure to publish. She still finds time to do research, and has received a leave to examine Nazi propaganda in French children's cartoons during World War II. She also used university research money to travel around France recording regional accents. "You get a fair amount of freedom as long as you do a really good job," she says.

Giving up tenure has been a good bargain, says Ms. Tufts, who also directs Duke's French-language program: "I don't feel like I'm not a whole person because I don't have tenure."

Many freshly minted Ph.D.'s set their sights on the prestige of a tenured position, and all that working for one entails, but other scholars are

looking for something different. Paula P. Lemons, who received her Ph.D. in biochemistry, came to Duke in 1999 as a teaching postdoc.

"I got my Ph.D. because I wanted to teach," she says. She considered applying to liberal-arts colleges where she would have lots of contact with undergraduates. Then a professor-of-the-practice slot opened up in Duke's biology department. She got the job.

Ms. Lemons coordinates the introductory-biology program, in which she teaches, and administers a training program for aspiring biology professors. "Research is too frustrating," she says. "In biochemistry, I had to wait too long for gratification. For me, teaching is so much more gratifying."

Plus, she says, "I don't feel the threat of the tenure knife."

### **Beyond Duke**

Despite the satisfaction of many professors and administrators at Duke, some faculty groups worry that creating an additional track of nontenured professors spells bad news for the profession. Richard Moser, an associate secretary at the AAUP, says that the organization would support an arrangement like Duke's only if it represented an incremental step toward tenure for adjunct faculty members.

Without tenure, he says, professors cannot freely question university practices and policies, and they have no true job security. (A Duke administrator says fewer than 10 professors have been let go since the Duke program's inception, and most had to leave because of programmatic changes.)

Mr. Moser says separating professors into ranks based on their research and teaching activities would lead to a plantation-style system.

But what if all sides seem to be content with the arrangements, as they are at Duke? "Were there happy slaves? Sure," says Mr. Moser. "Our concern is the health of the institutions over all."

Mr. Hoeller, the adjunct organizer, says it is irrelevant whether professors in those positions are happy: "Most newlyweds are quite happy, too, especially on their honeymoons," he says. He worries about what happens after the honeymoon is over.

When conflicts arise with part-time and non-tenure-track faculty members, Mr. Hoeller says, safeguards for academic freedom -- including due process, grievance procedures, and rights to appeal -- become essential. Tenure, he argues, is the surest guarantee of academic freedom. "When you undercut tenure, you also undercut the mission of the university," he says.

At a large research university like NYU, a class of non-tenure-track

professors devoted to teaching would offer great benefits, counters Mr. Sexton, the university's president. In a position paper he wrote last summer, he introduced his ideas on the matter, which he calls "a work in progress."

He has already hired about a dozen "teaching professors," who are similar to professors of the practice, as well as about 20 "global professors," distinguished professors from abroad who commit some time to the university. He is considering creating "cyberprofessors" and "arts professors." While those jobs haven't been fully fleshed out yet, they would be full-time, non-tenure-track positions for people with particular skills in technology or the performing arts.

Teaching professors, he argues, would come into play in cases where tenured professors were not up to certain tasks. Some tenured professors "who are brilliant in seminars, are ineffective in large classes," he writes. "Some who are brilliant with students whose basic and intermediate skills have been carefully honed would be disasters in introductory courses."

He envisions one- to three-year contracts initially for teaching professors, then three- to six-year contracts, with the possibility of further renewal. "We're not viewing this as a relationship that has to end," says Mr. Sexton.

Mosette Broderick, a teaching professor, teaches urban design and architecture at NYU. He has been an adjunct and then a lecturer at NYU for 20 years but was recently given his current title, clinical associate professor of fine arts. He has a three-year contract but understands that he can work until he retires as long as he performs well.

Mr. Broderick concentrates on teaching, advising, and helping his students get jobs in urban design. "You end up spending a lot of time with students," he says, because "the superstars don't do it."

NYU's global professors commit at least a few months a year to the university on a continuing basis and spend their time teaching, advising, collaborating with other faculty members, or pursuing other activities depending on their interests.

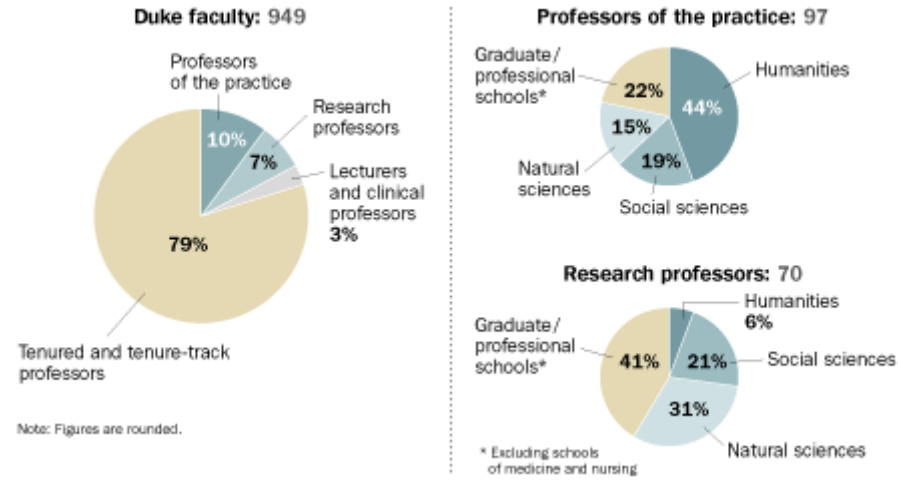
For each new category of professor, Mr. Sexton expects to tailor relationships to the idiosyncrasies of the discipline, as Duke has. He says there will be no attempt to impose a uniform set of standards and rights, although NYU would create floors for benefits like salary.

The changes would be healthy for the faculty, he says. More and more, "highly talented people are going to want different plans at different times," he says. "We are trying to celebrate that."

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#### **WHERE DUKE'S PROFESSORS PRACTICE**

At Duke University, 17 percent of faculty members are what Duke calls "professors of the practice" or research professors, which means they are not on the tenure track. More than three-quarters of them are concentrated in the arts and sciences, where the humanities have the largest number of professors of the practice, and natural sciences have the most research professors.



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