

Contract Faculty Senators Council
Committee on Faculty Housing and Benefits
Report on Housing and Benefits Priorities of Contract Faculty
April 24, 2018

In response to a charge from the Steering Committee to inform the direction of the University's Work-Life Office, the Committee on Faculty Housing and Benefits makes the following report on housing and benefits priorities for contract faculty.

Our report draws on our long experiences with these issues, discussions with the council and with constituents, and the results of the University-wide work-life survey conducted last year.

We have identified the following priorities. We discuss each below, and also append relevant results from the recent work-life survey.¹

- Housing and purchase assistance
- Family Care: child care, adoption, schooling, elder care
- Teaching schedules
- Educating constituents about available benefits
- Personal and professional support
- Retirement planning

Housing

The high cost of housing in the New York-area is the primary issue for contract faculty. While cognizant that this is an issue appreciated both within the University administration and among the Board of Trustees, we also acknowledge that it is one about which the University can do little directly to ameliorate. Our recommendations are therefore informed by a sense of realism about how the high costs of New York real estate constrains the University's aspirations.

1. Housing purchase assistance. We urge the University to develop a needs-tested program of shared equity purchase assistance and an employee mortgage program.
2. Together with our concerns outlined below, we urge that work-life policies be informed by the constraints of the New York housing market. In particular, policies should reflect the reality that the vast majority of contract faculty do not live in University housing and frequently must devote substantial time, effort, and expense to commuting to campus.

Family Care

Contract faculty share a number of family care concern. Chief among them are the desirability of supporting faculty with child care responsibilities, and recognizing that these fall disproportionately on women early in their careers.

1. Child care support benefits targeted to early-career faculty.

1. We omit discussion of accommodation of faculty with disabilities and of tuition remission benefits. Each of these is already being addressed by the University separately.

2. Support for family care concerns such as adoption, emergency child care, travel and conference child care, elder care, and assistance with schooling options.

Teaching Schedules

Because contract faculty are hired primarily to fulfill instructional needs, we have relatively less flexibility in our teaching assignments in comparison to tenure-line faculty. Given the realities of the University's class schedule, early morning and late afternoon classes therefore have a disproportionate impact on contract faculty, whether because of domestic responsibilities or long commutes. At the same time, we are also concerned that scheduling demands should not fall inequitably on faculty who may be without such responsibilities or who may live more proximately to campus.

1. We urge that the University's work-life initiatives recognize the special constraints faced by contract faculty, and that the University, and its schools, departments, and programs, act affirmatively to accommodate contract faculty when setting teaching schedules.

Education about available benefits

Raising awareness about available benefits is an issue of long concern and one that has proven difficult to improve. Of particular concern are the low rates of utilization of tax-advantaged benefits such as those for commuting, health care, and dependent care costs. We urge that the University adopt a much more proactive approach to informing faculty and staff about these benefits, recognizing that personal contacts are more effective than mass communications.

1. Orientations for new department chairs that include a specific charge that chairs should counsel faculty both individually and collectively about available benefits on an on-going basis.
2. Improved on-boarding orientation for new faculty and staff.
3. New initiatives by the Work-Life Office and the Benefits Office to raise awareness and participation.

Personal and Professional Support

A large number of contract faculty report a need for support in their professional work—especially in their responsibilities for personnel and program management—or in their personal lives.

1. Professional development programming to support faculty with administrative and personnel management responsibilities.
2. Work-life programming informed by a recognition of the need to support faculty and staff in their personal well-being.
3. Continued attention to assuring faculty receive due consideration of requests to matriculate in graduate degree programs at the University using their employee tuition benefits.

Retirement Planning

The consolidation of University Retirement Plan record-keeping with TIAA presents an opportunity to increase faculty awareness about retirement planning. It is also an opportunity to develop a policy on phased retirement in line with best practices at other institutions.

1. Faculty life-cycle programming and improved retirement counseling.
2. Development of a University policy on phased retirement.

Ranked Work-Life Issues for Contract Faculty (Work-Life survey report 9/17)²

- 34 I want to purchase a home within the next 5 years
- 25 I would like to see more resources to help cope with stress
- 24 I would like to see more events on campus focusing on nutrition and exercise
- 22 I would like to see more training for improving my skills in my current job
- 17 I don't live on campus and am exploring retirement within the next five years
- 17 I supervise at least 2 full-time employees
- 14 I have senior care responsibilities for a family member
- 13 I am seriously considering adopting or having a child
- 13 I am interested in seminars about school options
- 10 I have a child(ren) under the age of 18 months at home
- 9 I have a child(ren) between the age of 19 months and four years
- 6 I have a child(ren) with special needs
- 5 I have a child(ren) starting kindergarten in September 2017
- 3 I live on campus and am exploring retirement within the next 5 years
- 2 I have a physical disability that requires reasonable accommodation to perform at work

2. Numbers are percentage of respondents who selected the response. Respondents were free to choose any number of responses.