



**Date:** May 12, 2020

**Memorandum to:** Katherine Fleming, Provost

**From:** Nicholas Economides  
Chairperson, T-Faculty Senators Council  
A/Y 2019-2020

**Subject:** T-Faculty Senators Council Letter to the Provost about the Policy concerning C-Faculty as Principal Investigators

The T-Faculty Senators Council submits the attached letter, approved by the Council at the May 7, 2020 meeting.

**cc:** Kristen Day, Vice Provost  
Ellen Schall, Senior Presidential Fellow

Darcey Merritt, T-FSC Vice Chairperson  
David Irving, T-FSC Secretary  
Wen Ling, T-FSC Immediate Past Chair

Phyllis Frankl, T-FSC Personnel Policies & Tenure Modifications Co-Chair  
Robert Lapiner, T-FSC Personnel Policies & Tenure Modifications Co-Chair

Larry Slater, C-FSC Chairperson

**Date: May 7, 2020**

**RE: Letter to the Provost about the Policy concerning C-Faculty as Principal Investigators**

The T-FSC enthusiastically supports contract faculty engaging in research, and we warmly welcome their contributions to generating new knowledge and scholarship. However, we are concerned that the new provostial policy easing the authorization of C-Faculty to be principal investigators was introduced without discussion with the T-FSC, overlooking the centrality of research to the role of tenured and tenure-track faculty within the tripartite missions of the university.

These are our particular concerns:

- 1) The authorization for C-faculty to serve as PI's in "basic, applied, and experimental research" appears somewhat ambiguously open-ended for the community of C-faculty as a whole. We recognize that in many NYU schools there are non-tenured faculty who are exclusively supported by external research grants and whose appointments have been contingent upon continuity of funding. If the policy is conceived primarily for such contract research faculty in the sciences, engineering, and the health sciences, for example, we believe it would be prudent to so specify.
- 2) The assignment of responsibility for authorization to department chairs and deans identified that certain conditions must be met—but leaves others unstated. In particular, we regret that among the several enumerated conditions, the policy is silent on whether there is an expectation that the research project would align with or be distinct from other ongoing research projects in their departments or schools. While we understand that **practice** in most cases where C-Faculty are routinely engaged in research is already collegial and collaborative (and thus the alignment may be assumed), we believe that **stipulating** such expectations in the policy would better serve all faculty researchers in the following ways:
  - a. It would reinforce the importance of protecting (and building on) established relationships with funding agencies and the global community of research scholars with whom all faculty conducting and overseeing research interact--as well as clarify differentiated responsibilities for mentoring of doctoral students and post-docs
  - b. Given the constrained resources and exiguity of our research infrastructure in the sciences at NYU, it would help mitigate potential competition for adequate departmental resources, space, and personnel for the conduct of any new research activity.

- 3) We are also concerned that not clarifying the category of C-Faculty and Schools/Institutes for which the policy is primarily intended creates an ambiguity that might prove deleterious for some of our continuing contract faculty colleagues, especially in schools where C-faculty have a range of responsibilities, including teaching and administrative roles that do not normally include conducting funded research.
  - a. This ambiguity could be remedied in part by having the policy require that the efforts of C-faculty as approved PI's be *memorialized* in their letters of appointment, and include how much weight their serving as PI's will represent in their reviews, consideration of promotion and/or renewal.
  - b. In particular, we also think it would be prudent to affirm in the policy that creating a framework in which **some** C-faculty may serve as PI's, does **not** mean that "evidence of original research, or securing external research-funding" will become a new threshold in the processes for the appointment, reappointment, or promotion for **all** C-faculty.

In short, in the spirit of shared governance, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Provost's office to develop a better articulated and more carefully delineated statement of policies in the contract research space, better to clarify the rights and intended expectations they are designed to codify.