



TO: Senate Agenda Committee
FROM: Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty Committee
DATE: March 6, 2024
SUBJECT: Final report for Faculty Senate

The Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Faculty Committee carried out the specific charge assigned by SAC:

Charge 2: Research rolling contracts with security of employment policies at other institutions of higher education, including but not limited to Indiana University's rolling contracts and the University of California's Lecturer with Security of Employment (LSOE) and Lecturer with Potential for Security of Employment (LPSOE) positions. The committee will need to include a definition of a “rolling contract.”

In collaboration with the Provost's Office, explore the feasibility of implementing similar contracts at Northeastern University. If feasible, work with the Office of General Counsel to add language to the Faculty Handbook in the *Appointments, Promotions and Tenure* module which provides for rolling contracts with security of employment in the appointments or reappointments of FTNTT faculty.

Definition

A rolling contract is a multi-year employment contract that is automatically extended by one year at the start of each new contract period, such that the faculty member always has a fixed horizon of guaranteed employment ahead of them. Unlike a fixed-term contract (which runs to a set end date and must be formally renegotiated), a rolling contract perpetually “rolls forward” unless the institution takes affirmative action to half renewal.

Rolling Contract Policies at Peer Institutions

Institution	Contract Type Before Rolling	When Rolling Contract Begins	Term of Rolling Contract	How Broadly Granted
Indiana University	Initial 3-year appointment, then annual renewals	After probationary period (max 7 years), contingent on positive performance review	3-year rolling (or fixed 5-year, at department discretion)	All NTT instructional faculty: Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Teaching Professors, Clinical Faculty, Professors of Practice
University of California (LSOE)	2-year renewable terms during probationary period	After probationary period (max 8 years); upon promotion from LPSOE to LSOE	Continuous/indefinite appointment (not a rolling contract — functionally equivalent to tenure)	Teaching Professor series only; requires permanently budgeted FTE; Academic Senate members
University of Delaware	Three successive 2-year contracts (probationary period)	Year 7, following successful peer review; advances to 5-year rolling after second review	5-year rolling, subject to annual review	All continuing full-time NTT faculty (codified in CBA with AAUP)
UT Austin (COLA)	Short-term (1-year) or fixed multi-year contracts	Available after initial appointment; no formal probationary period requirement	3-year rolling (extended each fall by one year)	COLA stopped issuing new rolling contracts; existing ones continue; other UT colleges may still issue them
State College of Florida	Annual contracts for first 5 years	After 5 years of continuous service with strong evaluations	Continuous 1-year contracts with due process protections (not a fixed multi-year term)	All full-time faculty — but eliminated by Board of Trustees in 2015; new hires returned to annual contracts with no due process guarantee

Rolling Contracts at Other Institutions

The committee researched rolling contract and security of employment policies at peer institutions, focusing on the models specifically named in the charge as well as additional institutions that offer instructive comparisons. Across all models reviewed, a consistent pattern emerges: long-term contracts are most effectively implemented when tied to demonstrated excellence, grounded in Faculty Handbook language, supported by explicit due process protections, and structured as earned recognition rather than default entitlement.

Indiana University

IU Board of Trustees Policy BOT-07 (Regulation of Clinical and Lecturer/Teaching Professor Appointments, last revised June 2025) is the core operational policy governing IU’s NTT rolling contract framework and the primary source for the committee’s charge. The policy explicitly frames long-term contracts as an academic freedom protection, requiring that after a probationary period of not more than seven years, Lecturers/Teaching Professors receive a long-term appointment of at least five years “or some equivalent, such as a rolling three-year appointment” — making rolling contracts a formally recognized option, not an exception. Post-probation dismissal is limited to professional incompetence, serious misconduct, or financial exigency, and non-reappointment decisions must involve faculty consultation through school governance and are subject to campus grievance jurisdiction. All rights and regulations must be written, publicly available, and filed with both the campus chief academic officer and faculty governance body — a transparency requirement Northeastern would need to mirror in any Faculty

Handbook language. This policy provides the most complete and directly adaptable model for the committee's proposed handbook language.

University of California (LSOE/Professor of Teaching Series)

UC Academic Personnel Manual Section 285 (revised May 2024) governs the Professor of Teaching series — the formal framework underlying the LSOE/LPSOE model. It defines the series as designed for long-term instructional needs that cannot be best met by research-track faculty, with teaching excellence as the primary criterion for all appointments and advancements. A permanently budgeted FTE is required for every full-time appointment, preventing the series from being used for temporary or soft-money positions. The policy creates a clear two-tier employment structure: Assistant Professors of Teaching serve renewable two-year terms with an eight-year probationary maximum and specified advance notice for non-renewal; upon promotion to Associate Professor of Teaching, security of employment is granted and the appointment continues indefinitely, terminable only for good cause following a Senate hearing — functionally equivalent to tenure. All ranks are full Academic Senate members eligible for sabbatical, and salary scales mirror the professorial series. Chancellors may cap appointments in the series by school or department, offering the kind of institutional flexibility that could address administrative concerns about budget commitment at Northeastern. The 2024 revision also formalized the title change from LPSOE/LSOE to Assistant/Associate/Professor of Teaching — aligning directly with Northeastern's existing FTNTT title structure.

By contrast, APM-283 — the UC policy governing basic Lecturer and Senior Lecturer titles — illustrates the structural gap the LSOE model was designed to close. Under APM-283, Lecturers are temporarily contracted instructors with no path to security of employment, no Senate membership, no sabbatical eligibility, and no research expectations, a situation that closely mirrors Northeastern's current FTNTT structure. The contrast between APM-283 and APM-285 makes the case for why title alone is insufficient: the structural protections of APM-285 are what create meaningful security. APM-133 (revised October 2025) reinforces this by establishing the eight-year probationary maximum and "up or out" structure that prevents institutions from keeping faculty in indefinite probationary limbo, along with clock-stopping provisions for parental leave, FMLA, and other significant life circumstances.

Empirical evidence from a peer-reviewed study of the UC system (Harlow, Lo, Saichaie & Sato, *PLoS ONE*, 2020) surveyed over 80% of STEM L(P)SOE faculty and more than 20 deans and chairs across the UC system. Faculty and administrators showed strong alignment on role expectations, most L(P)SOEs reported having adequate resources, and the position demonstrated notable gender equity compared to tenure-track STEM faculty nationally. However, the study also surfaces implementation challenges: few L(P)SOEs had formal education research training despite growing scholarly expectations, only 10.7% had reduced teaching loads to support that work, and expectations shifted inconsistently across ranks and departments over time. For Northeastern, this reinforces that the strength of a security-of-employment model lies in clarity of role and faculty-administrator alignment — and that explicit criteria, resource commitments, and uniform standards are essential to prevent uneven implementation.

University of Delaware

Section 4.1.6 of the University of Delaware Faculty Handbook (rev. May 2025) provides the most detailed and directly adaptable model for the committee's charge. Continuing Track faculty follow a structured progression: a six-year probationary period of two successive three-year appointments with annual review; full peer reviews in years three and six; a successful year-six review leads to a third three-year contract, while failure results in a terminal seventh year; a fourth peer review then determines whether the faculty member advances to the endpoint — a five-year rolling contract renewed annually and subject to peer evaluation every five years. Salary adjustments are tied to each transition, parallel to associate and then full professor promotional increments, and Continuing Track faculty become eligible for sabbatical at the end of the probationary period on the same schedule as tenure-track faculty. Termination during any multi-year contract, whether for confirmed unsatisfactory performance or programmatic/budgetary reasons, requires one full year's written notice, and clock-stopping provisions cover parental leave, FMLA, and other approved circumstances. Delaware's model is also notable for its governance architecture: rolling contract provisions are embedded in both the Faculty Handbook and the CBA with the AAUP, making them substantially harder to revoke than purely administrative practice — a key protection illustrated by cautionary cases at other institutions.

University of Texas at Austin (COLA)

The University of Texas at Austin's College of Liberal Arts Professional-Track Faculty Length of Contract Policy (updated May 2025) offers a practical tiered model that ties contract type to rank: entry-level faculty receive short-term or fixed contracts, while mid- and highest-level faculty are eligible for 2- or 3-year fixed or rolling contracts. Rolling contracts are explicitly reserved for "exceptional cases where long-term continuity is critical and clearly supported by performance, programmatic need, and financial capacity" — earned recognition rather than a default. All multi-year contracts require written departmental criteria, budget confirmation, and Associate Dean approval, and the Provost's Office recommends six semesters of teaching before any multi-year commitment is made. Notably, COLA subsequently stopped issuing new rolling contracts — a real-world illustration of the institutional resistance that can emerge over time and the importance of embedding rolling contract protections in durable policy rather than relying on college-level discretion alone.

State College of Florida (Cautionary Contrast)

The State College of Florida's collective bargaining agreement offers a cautionary contrast. Its "continuing contract" system becomes available after five years of satisfactory teaching within a seven-year window but contains a critical weakness: termination of a continuing contract employee is explicitly excluded from grievance, arbitration, and hearing procedures, and non-renewal requires no stated reason. This continuous appointment without meaningful due process provides far weaker academic freedom safeguards than the IU or UC models and reinforces the importance of explicitly building grievance rights, for-cause termination standards, and faculty consultation requirements

into any Northeastern rolling contract policy from the outset. The cautionary dimension was further illustrated in 2015, when the college's Board of Trustees voted 7-1 to eliminate its continuous contract system entirely — over the objection of both faculty and the college's own academic administrators — with no clear rationale offered. The AAUP characterized academic freedom as “the first casualty” of the move. For Northeastern, this case underscores why durable Faculty Handbook language is essential to protect any rolling contract system from future reversal.

Other Considerations

Events at Clark University in 2025 provide a further cautionary example. Clark's senior administration shortened NTT contracts for Professors of Practice, Teaching Professors, and Research Professors from three years to one year amid enrollment declines and budget pressure. An anonymous faculty member warned that renewal would now be “directly tied to Clark's financial health, not to their performance as researchers and educators.” The episode demonstrates that without explicit for-cause non-renewal language, institutions under financial strain may treat longer contracts as a discretionary benefit rather than a durable commitment — precisely the outcome rolling contract policy should be designed to prevent.

Writing in *Academe*, an NTT faculty member describes asking an associate provost whether NTT faculty enjoyed the same academic freedom protections as their tenured colleagues. The provost affirmed that they did — then immediately added, “But you have a one-year contract.” The exchange cuts to the heart of the committee's charge: without enforceable job security, academic freedom protections are largely symbolic. Rolling or long-term contracts, combined with meaningful due process for non-renewal, are the mechanism through which institutions can make academic freedom real for NTT faculty rather than merely aspirational — the same framing Indiana University uses in its own policy language.

Overall Recommendations

The research conducted under this charge supports a clear finding: rolling contracts with security of employment are a well-established, legally tested mechanism at peer R1 institutions and are directly feasible at Northeastern University. The committee recommends that the Provost's Office and Office of General Counsel be engaged to develop Faculty Handbook language in the Appointments, Promotions and Tenure module that provides for rolling contracts tied to promotion to Full Teaching Professor, Senior Co-op Faculty, Full Clinical Faculty, and Full Research Faculty ranks, based on the following principles drawn from peer institution models.

Tie rolling contract eligibility to promotion to Full Teaching Professor. Nearly every peer model reviewed links long-term contract security to a demonstrated record of sustained excellence rather than to time served alone. IU frames rolling contracts as analogous to tenure, earned through criteria parallel to the tenure review. UC's security of employment is granted upon promotion to Associate Teaching Professor. Delaware's rolling contract is the endpoint of a structured promotion pathway. Anchoring rolling contract eligibility to promotion to Full Teaching Professor, Senior Co-op Faculty, Full Clinical

Faculty, and Full Research Faculty ranks at Northeastern follows the same logic and gives the Provost's Office a clear, defensible rationale: the institution is recognizing peer-reviewed excellence in a senior faculty member, not making an open-ended financial commitment. This framing directly addresses the budget flexibility concerns administrators typically raise while providing meaningful, durable job security to Northeastern's most experienced and accomplished FTNTT faculty. The committee also recommends exploring whether rolling contracts should be available — perhaps as an option rather than automatic — upon promotion to Associate Teaching Professor, Associate Co-op Faculty, Associate Clinical Faculty, and Associate Research Faculty, to provide a nearer-term pathway to security and support retention of mid-career FTNTT faculty.

Embed rolling contract language in the Faculty Handbook, not administrative guidelines alone. The cautionary cases at the State College of Florida (2015), Clark University (2025), and UT Austin's COLA demonstrate that rolling contracts implemented only through administrative practice are vulnerable to unilateral reversal during budget downturns or leadership changes. Delaware's model — with rolling contracts codified in both the Faculty Handbook and the CBA — provides the strongest protection. At minimum, Northeastern's rolling contract policy should be placed in the Faculty Handbook's Appointments, Promotions and Tenure module and approved through the Faculty Senate, as the charge directs.

Include explicit for-cause termination standards and notice requirements. All effective peer models specify that post-probation dismissal may occur only for professional incompetence, serious misconduct, or financial exigency — and that programmatic or budgetary non-renewal requires at least one year's written notice. These provisions are essential to making rolling contracts meaningful rather than merely cosmetic. The IU BOT-07 and Delaware Section 4.1.6 models provide the most directly adaptable language for this purpose.

Develop written, uniform criteria and require peer review for all rolling contract awards. Every peer model reviewed requires that rolling contracts be awarded on the basis of a formal peer review rather than administrative discretion, and that criteria be written and publicly available. The UC empirical study (Harlow et al., 2020) demonstrates that uneven departmental implementation and unclear criteria undermine the equity and effectiveness of even well-designed security-of-employment models. Northeastern's policy should require that each department or college develop written rolling contract criteria, filed with the Provost's Office and the Faculty Senate, as a condition of offering rolling contracts.

Include clock-stopping provisions parallel to the tenure clock. Both UC (APM-133) and Delaware (Section 4.1.6) include meaningful clock-stopping provisions for childbearing, parental leave, FMLA, serious health conditions, and other significant life circumstances. These provisions are both equitable and legally important and should be incorporated into any Northeastern rolling contract policy from the outset.

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