

## **Working With Faculty at Simpson College (8/26/2015)**

### **Introduction**

Every employee of Simpson College deserves respect for what she or he contributes to the mission of the institution. We work as members of a team, and just like a team, we each play different roles and have different strengths. This means that not all jobs are the same and not all jobs come with the same set of expectations. This document, and its companion, "Working With Staff at Simpson College," are designed to help everyone better understand the roles we all play at Simpson College. Our goal is to increase understanding and respect so our team functions at the highest possible level, making Simpson, and all of us, successful.

### **Types of Jobs at Simpson College**

Jobs at Simpson College are classified in one of three categories: exempt, non-exempt and faculty.

#### Non-faculty Employees

*Exempt employees* are those on annual contracts. They are not paid by the hour, but rather paid with a fixed salary. Although they are required to keep a time card, exempt employees are *exempt* from being paid over time. They tend to work until the job is done rather than on a fixed schedule. For many, this means evenings and weekends.

*Non-exempt employees* are those on hourly contracts. They are paid by the hour for their work. If non-exempt employees work more than their regularly scheduled hours, they will likely be paid for the extra hours (if approved by their supervisor). They keep a timecard of their hours.

Both exempt employees and non-exempt employees working full time accrue vacation time, sick leave and receive benefits. Part-time exempt employees and part-time non-exempt employees do not accrue vacation time or sick leave. Each position is assigned a grade level from 1 to 11. Grade levels can be found in the *Employee Handbook* (Appendix F) at: <http://simpson.edu/human-resources/employee-handbook/appendices/>. Compensation for exempt and non-exempt employees is set by the local conditions.

Both exempt and non-exempt employees are to receive annual performance reviews. Performance reviews are conducted by the employee's direct supervisor.

#### Faculty Employees

Employees considered faculty may be either part time or full time. Anyone who teaches class for Simpson is considered a faculty member. Each faculty member is given an academic "rank" depending on her or his education level and experience. Full-time faculty members receive annual contracts that run from late August through the end of May. They are not required to be on campus during college breaks, but generally spend break periods grading and preparing for the next semester. Faculty members do not accrue sick leave or vacation time. Full-time faculty members are scheduled to teach six or seven, four-credit courses each academic year. Except in a few cases, faculty members do not have prescribed institutional duties during the summer or when the college is on recess. The salary for full-time faculty members is determined individually in negotiations with the college at the time of hire. Each faculty member has a salary target that is pegged to the salaries of other faculty in the region.

After six years of full-time service, most faculty members are eligible and receive “tenure” through a system of peer review. Whereas most employees are evaluated by a single supervisor, faculty members are evaluated by a committee of faculty members. Tenure and peer review are traditions in education, particularly higher education. Tenure guarantees freedom of speech and inquiry for faculty members within their expertise. Tenure guarantees due process when a faculty member is to be disciplined or his or her contract is to be terminated. It doesn’t guarantee lifetime employment. While in their six-year probationary period, tenure-track faculty members receive annual reviews. A faculty member who receives tenure will have performance reviews every five years after being tenured. Faculty members who do not receive tenure are provided a one-year advance notice of termination.

It should be noted that some exempt employees are at times considered to be “faculty” members. The president of the college and the academic dean are exempt employees, but by tradition, they are also faculty members. Other exempt employees (Assistant Dean for Student Academic Achievement, Vice-President for Student Development, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, etc.) are given faculty title as adjuncts and academic rank when she or he teaches class, but they are not given a vote in meetings. There are also employees who are categorized as “Teaching Specialist” faculty members who serve in a teaching function but do not normally teach formal classes. Librarians, the college’s assistant technical director in the theatre department and our athletic trainers, among others, fit into this category.

### **Common Questions and Answers About Faculty**

**Q:** Why do people choose to become college teachers? And why teach at Simpson?

**A:** Studies show that people who teach college have been excited by learning and a particular academic subject at some point in their life and want to share what they know with others. Faculty who teach in the traditional day program in Indianola, like to help make a difference in the lives of young people. Faculty in the evening program are often working professionals who want to give back to their profession and help advance the careers of adult learners.

Faculty members also choose college teaching because there is quite a bit of freedom in their daily work schedule. Most of the time, faculty members get to choose (or at least participate in the choice) of when during the day they have class, what days of the week they come to campus, what books they use, their classroom approach, what they wear to their classrooms, when their offices are open, and most other things related to their professional lives. This is not just at Simpson College. The environment in which faculty work is different than staff, however, that doesn’t make it better, worse or special. It’s just what goes with the job of being a faculty member and is fairly consistent at most colleges and universities.

**Q:** How are faculty members hired?

**A:** Each time a full-time faculty vacancy occurs, the academic dean forms a committee that is usually headed by the academic department chair where the vacancy occurs, at least one additional faculty member from that same department, the academic division head and one faculty member from outside of the department. For full-time faculty, ads are placed in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and disciplinary journals. Typically, the college will receive between 20 and 150 applications, depending on the discipline. The committee sorts through the applications, does phone interviews and/or Skype interviews, and recommends the top three candidates be brought to campus for interviews. The final decision is made by the academic dean and the president of the college.

- Q: How is the performance of faculty reviewed?
- A: All tenure-track faculty members in their first few years (called the “probationary period”) are reviewed through a system outlined in the [Faculty Handbook](#). There are actually two reviews each year. One is to provide the person with information to improve his or her performance. It is performed by a committee of peers, generally the department chair, another faculty member from the department, and a faculty member outside of the department. The second is to make a formal decision about their re-hiring for the following year. This review is conducted by the department chair.
- Q: What exactly is the “tenure-track?”
- A: Being on the tenure-track means that the faculty member holds a position that leads to tenure. The process for receiving tenure is governed by the [Faculty Handbook](#). Not all full-time faculty members are in such a position. Faculty members who are not on the tenure-track or in a tenured position are hired on annual contracts.
- Q: Can full-time faculty be fired?
- A: Yes. Full-time, non-tenure track faculty can be fired during the time covered by their contract, or more likely, their contract will not be renewed at its end. Tenure-track faculty during their probationary period can be fired with adequate notice, which is described in the [Faculty Handbook](#). Tenured faculty can be fired for cause and for programmatic reasons. The process used to terminate the contract of a tenured faculty member is described in the [Faculty Handbook](#). The college’s policy with regard to tenure and termination is based on the recommendations of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).
- Q: Do faculty positions ever change from tenure track to non-tenure track? Or, once they are designated that way, are they always that way?
- A: Yes, and it’s happened at Simpson. There was a tenure-track position vacancy recently, and it was decided to make the position into a non-tenure track position. This was done to provide more flexibility to adjust to enrollment swings.
- Q: Why do faculty members get a one-year notice if they are not going to be renewed but staff members do not get that consideration?
- A: For tenure-track faculty, the [Faculty Handbook](#) states that is the practice based on the recommendation of the AAUP. Faculty members who are not on tenure track contracts can be let go upon the expiration of their one-year contract. Staff members are at-will employees who may be let go with appropriate notice.
- Q: Is AAUP like a union?
- A: Yes and no. AAUP is a voluntary association of faculty members and administrators. AAUP members pay dues. The primary role of AAUP is to preserve and protect academic freedom for faculty at colleges and universities. At the same time, AAUP does serve as a trade union at some institutions. Faculty at Simpson are non-union, even those individual faculty members who individually belong to AAUP. AAUP also provides institutions with recommendations for good practice in faculty hiring, review and support.
- Q: What is the best way to get in touch with faculty members during a break or during the summer?
- A: Faculty members prize their time during breaks and during the summer. As they are hired on a nine-month contract, the summer months give them time to work on their professional development and also prepare for the next semester. Many do not check their office phone or email as regularly as they do when school is in session. The best way to avoid the communication problems associated with faculty being off contract and during breaks is to plan ahead. Try to schedule communication before or after breaks. If need be, contact the faculty member’s department chair or the academic dean.

- Q: What is the best way to get in touch with a faculty member during the school year?
- A: Most faculty members regularly check their office voice mail and their Simpson College email. Sometimes during the semester, faculty members are at professional conferences or traveling, and it will be difficult for faculty to respond. If after trying twice you haven't received a response to your email or phone call, contact the department chair to find out if the faculty member is out of town.
- Q: How many courses do faculty members teach?
- A: The normal range for teaching load for high quality colleges like Simpson is five to eight classes per academic year. The normal teaching load at Simpson College is six, four-credit courses. In some circumstances, faculty will teach more than six courses per year. Faculty members have four primary responsibilities: teaching, advising, sharing governance of the institution by serving on committees, and contributing new knowledge to the discipline. In addition, faculty must keep up-to-date in their field. It should be noted that teaching requires a lot more than the actual in-class hours. Faculty members spend a considerable amount of time outside of class preparing, grading, developing presentations, meeting with students, etc.
- Q: Are faculty required to be on campus during work hours each day?
- A: Yes and no. The college expects that each full-time faculty member will spend no fewer than four days per week on campus. In addition, full-time faculty members are required to have at least six scheduled office hours each week. National studies have consistently shown that when you add the teaching hours, the hours spent preparing to teach and those spent doing research, advising students and grading papers, attending committee meetings, etc., faculty in colleges and universities report being engaged with the work of their job between 50 and 60 hours per week.
- Q: Are the department chairs like managers or supervisors?
- A: Yes and no. Technically, the department chair is supervisor for those faculty members who serve in her or his department. All department chairs are in temporary positions. Each department chair is on a three-year contract. Each department chair will likely one day not be department chair. Except in a few cases, department chairs are not paid for their work. They do it for free as a service to their departmental colleagues and the college. Practically speaking, department chairs are more like coordinators than supervisors.
- Q: If department chairs are not really supervisors, who does supervise faculty members?
- A: Ultimately, the academic dean is the supervisor for all faculty.
- Q: If I have a concern, complaint or compliment about the conduct of a faculty member, whom should I contact?
- A: You are encouraged to share your thoughts directly with the faculty member. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, you should contact the department chair. If that doesn't seem appropriate, you should contact the academic dean.
- Q: What do I do if a faculty member asks me to do something outside of my job description or questions my authority within my job responsibilities? How should I respond?
- A: We all work together for the good of our students and the college. If you feel that a faculty member asks you to do something outside of your job responsibilities or questions your authority, you should contact your immediate supervisor. She or he will contact the individual, the department chair, or in some cases, the academic dean. If you do not feel comfortable talking to your immediate supervisor, please feel free to contact the academic dean.
- Q: How do faculty salaries compare to staff salaries at Simpson College?
- A: The salary benchmark for Simpson faculty is set by looking at the salaries of other faculty members at other colleges. Salaries for faculty across the country are collected by the AAUP and institutions are each given a rating from one to four for each faculty rank. Wealthy institutions

like Grinnell regularly get the highest ranking, a one. The ratings for Simpson College vary by academic rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor) but all typically fall between three and four, the lowest categories. National averages are used to set the benchmarks for faculty at Simpson, because Simpson faculty members are drawn from all over the country. In order to compete for high-quality faculty members, Simpson has to offer salaries that are competitive. Salaries for exempt and non-exempt employees at Simpson are set by prevailing wage conditions in Indianola and the Des Moines area as most non-faculty employees are drawn from the surrounding area.

Q: What is a sabbatical?

A: A sabbatical is a time for tenured faculty to concentrate on one of their main responsibilities: keeping up to date in their academic disciplines. For some faculty members, this means doing research and publishing their work. For others, it means producing works of art, doing conference presentations, etc. All of this professional work takes focused time. It is a tradition at high quality colleges to provide faculty (once they are tenured) time every seven years to focus on their professional work. Sabbaticals are not automatic, however. Faculty members must prepare a proposal for what they are going to do, and their project must be accepted by a committee of faculty members. In addition, when they return from sabbatical, faculty members need to show that they have accomplished their professional goals.

Q: Faculty don't accrue sick days. How many sick days are they allotted?

A: None. We cover faculty who get sick and can't meet class by asking colleagues to cover their courses for free for up to two weeks, or we hire someone to cover the classes.

Q: What happens when a faculty member cancels class because the weather prevents them from getting to campus? How often are they allowed to cancel their classes each semester and how is that monitored/enforced?

A: Faculty members who cannot meet their class for any reason are required to report it to their department chair and to the academic dean's office. If we notice faculty members canceling class more than is usual, the academic dean follows-up. There is no specific number of missed days. Now with the internet, it is much easier than it used to be to keep students on track without being physically present. In our blended learning evening classes, much of the work is done online and not in class.

This document was not meant to be all-inclusive so if you have any additional questions, please feel free to ask.